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THE

BAR SINISTER.

A TALE.

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AUTHOR OF "A CRUISE UPON WHEELS," "THE EYE-WITNESS,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS

OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

Chapter		Page
I.	Trelane engages a Servant	1
II.	A Journey of a Strange and Novel Description	24
III.	The Search begun	46
IV.	The Search continued	65
V.	The Journey's Issue	81
VI.	A very short Chapter	94
VII.	Dr. Lebœuf's Visitors	106
VIII.	A Strange Revelation	129
IX.	Declaration of War	145
X.	An Exit	170
XI.	A Hostile Meeting	179
XII.	Kyrie Eleison	212
XIII.	Preparations for Penitence	230
XIV.	More Preparations for Penitence	257
XV.	Inveni Portum	284
XVI.	A last Ordeal	301
Conclusion		331

THE BAR SINISTER.

A Tale.

CHAPTER I.

TRELANE ENGAGES A SERVANT.

And now Trelane was more than ever resolved to carry out his determination of proceeding at once to Bourges and endeavouring to find some clue to the hiding-place of those two English ladies. He now saw the character of Alexis in a new and most unsatisfactory light. He was convinced that the suspicion which he had originally formed was correct. He could no longer doubt that d'Elmar was resolved to keep both these ladies in close retirement, for some purpose of his own; and what might that purpose be? What could be his motive, unless it were a wish to have that helpless young lady in his power; to maintain his hold upon her, and

above all, to prevent any one else from supplanting him in her—it was impossible to say affections, for in them surely this man could have no place? At any rate, he was determined to keep her from coming in contact with any one with whom he himself might be disadvantageously compared. And who were these English ladies? Had they no one to take interest in them except this one Frenchman? Were they altogether, as they seemed to be, in his power? and Madeleine herself, was she happy in being under such restraint? Was the fate that seemed to be in store for her one to which it was possible that she could willingly resign herself?

With these questions, and many more of a similar kind, our Englishman was now continually troubling himself, and to how little purpose? It is easy to ask oneself questions, but it is very difficult to get answers to them. Trelane arrived in Paris with his questions unsolved.

He had left instructions at the hotel that, in case a certain M. Jacques Morlot came there and inquired for him, he was to be allowed to go into his apartment and there wait Trelane's arrival. Our Englishman had, however, forgotten all about this, and therefore was the more surprised when, on entering his room, he found a gentleman of sedate appearance seated at his table, with a small box or casket open before him containing sundry bottles, and a great many small packets of divers forms. The sedate

gentleman had, moreover, various little blank books that looked like account-books, open on the table; he had a pen and ink too, with which he was writing inscriptions on some of the little packets before mentioned, and close to his side was a small tray, in which were rows of lancets, two or three pairs of forceps, a probang, and other instruments of a like ingratiatory sort; but all brilliantly kept, and in the choicest order. All these matters the sedate gentleman was handling in the daintiest manner. When he took out a packet a small pigeon-hole was left vacant which it exactly fitted; when he lifted a bottle to see that the label upon it was correct, the compartment out of which the bottle came was found to be lined with a deep layer of wadding covered over with velvet, so that the bottle might run no risk of breakage. Everything had a groove, or a compartment, or a drawer to itself; everything was labelled, and every label was written in the same small handwriting.

The sedate gentleman, who was no other than our dearly beloved friend, Monsieur Jacques Morlot, rose quite calmly on Trelane's entry, and, making him a profound bow, inquired as if what he said was part of a conversation which had been going on for some time:—

"Is it the custom of monsieur to keep his accounts by single or double entry?"

As Trelane was never in the habit of keeping

accounts by any kind of entry whatsoever, this question was rather a difficult one to answer. The major was, in fact, so entirely knocked over by what he saw before him, and by this demand together, that he remained altogether speechless.

"I would say," said Monsieur Morlot, putting it differently, with a view to being more intelligible, "is it the habit of monsieur to enter the different items of his expenditure all together and to subdivide them under heads afterwards, or to enter them under their specific headings at once?"

"In the name of Heaven!" said our Englishman, recovering at length the use of speech, and pointing to the mass of objects arranged upon his table; "in the name of Heaven! what are all these things?"

"Monsieur, it would take a long time, a very long time, to tell you what they *all* are. However, if monsieur desires to know: this," he continued, beginning methodically with the front row of bottles, and selecting that which occupied the left-hand corner compartment—"this is valerianate of zinc, a tonic antispasmodic of great power and efficiency; this again," he continued, lifting another bottle, after softly dropping the first into its place—"this is the spirit of nitric ether, stimulant and diuretic; it——"

"No, no," interrupted our bewildered major; "that is not what I meant. I want to know what all these things are here for, how they came here, who they belong to."

"Monsieur, as to who they belong to, strictly speaking, they are the property of your humble servant;" this was accompanied with a profound bow; "as to whose they virtually are, as to the gentleman for whose use and comfort they are intended, and who is as welcome to avail himself of them," he added, taking out a lancet, and gently feeling its edge, "as the flowers in May; that gentleman is Monsieur le Major himself."

"But, my good friend," Trelane burst out, "what do I want with your antispasmodics and diuretics? I never travelled with anything of the sort in my life."

"So much the worse, monsieur," replied Monsieur Morlot, gravely. "A great mistake, believe me. Besides, Monsieur will not fail to remember that he has been recently a great invalid and sufferer. Monsieur has passed through a crisis, and there is no telling to what extent monsieur's constitution is impaired. It might happen to monsieur to be afflicted with spasm of the respiratory organs, and then he has only to speak, and here," continued Monsieur Morlot, bringing his finger, with a sweeping pounce, down upon the stopper of one of the bottles—"here is the ethereal tincture of the Lobelia inflata, a sedative, expectorant, and also an antispasmodic. Rheumatism, again, might settle on the localities were monsieur has received his wounds; here"—at this the fore finger pounced again—"here is the wine of colchicum,

narcotic, diuretic, and cathartic. Or, supposing that fever was once again to set in and the head of monsieur to become affected, here I have a collection of LEECHES, which, for vigorous appetite and discerning choice of locality in their gripe, I will match against any in the world," and with that, this remarkable personage held up a round glass jar covered over with perforated zinc, and containing about half a dozen of the wriggling monsters in a violent state of activity.

"And do you mean to say that you propose travelling about with those disgusting animals in your keeping?" asked Trelane.

"Monsieur, they are leeches whose acquaintance I do not make now for the first time. They have long been pets of mine, and I can answer for their discretion and general good behaviour."

The major was entirely nonplussed. He sat himself down in a chair and looked about him. Close by his side was his open portmanteau. By Jove! Monsieur Morlot had been at work here too. More labelling. More methodical arrangement. Here was a package, done up in paper, flat, square, symmetrical, and inscribed, in French of course, "black coat of society;" here was another, "pantaloons of society." Each pair of boots was wrapped up in a separate parcel, and the nature of the article designated in simple terms. "Boots lacing in front," or "boots with buttons," or "boots lacing in front of

extra thickness." Trelane took up the parcels one after another, and inspected them in a sort of lazy stupefaction. What a man was this Monsieur Morlot!

That worthy gentleman had now resumed his occupation of arranging the different articles in the medicine-chest in their proper places. He was not the least discomposed, and went on with his work till everything was arranged; after which he gave the box a violent shake to satisfy himself that all was tight and firm. The leeches, by-the-by, did not reside in the medicine-chest: the bottle in which they lived shared with a certain tin Etna a leather pouch, which could be strapped round Monsieur Morlot's body. "By that means," he said, "they were always kept the right way upwards, and the water did not spill." Everything was now put in its place except the account-books, which still lay out upon the table.

"And how did you leave Doctor Lebœuf?" asked Trelane, who had been watching all the proceedings which we have described in silence.

"Monsieur le Docteur was as monsieur saw him in the morning—in excellent health."

"I am afraid that it will be a great inconvenience to him to be deprived of your services?"

"Monsieur, he is a man of enormous resources; in addition to which I may mention that he will be attended by Madame Morlot, who is almost as

well acquainted with the doctor's ways, and mode of life, as I am myself."

"Madame Morlot?" said Trelane, with some surprise. "You are married, then?"

"Apparently, monsieur."

"I am delighted to hear that the doctor is to have some one with him who is acquainted with his habits—I feel the less compunction in taking you away. And now," continued the major, "I am just going out to dine, and I recommend you to get some dinner also; the people here will give you anything you require."

M. Morlot bowed.

"To-morrow morning we shall leave Paris by an early train—at a quarter to nine, in fact. For this evening, Monsieur Morlot, your time is at your own disposal."

M. Morlot bowed over again, and Trelane was just leaving the room, when his movements were arrested by the proprietor of the medicine-chest.

"Monsieur has not informed me what system he wishes employed in the keeping of his accounts."

"Oh, any system—no system at all. I never keep any."

"Monsieur can hardly have considered the importance of the subject. Monsieur, it will be absolutely indispensable that we should adopt some system of accounts, though whether general or par-

ticularized, that is to say, kept in the mass or under distinct headings, I leave to monsieur."

"Well, then," said Trelane, who was anxious on any terms to get rid of the subject, "I, in turn, will leave it to you; only don't expect any assistance from me."

"Then, monsieur, we will adopt the system of entry under headings. I will prepare the volumes accordingly."

And so Trelane was at last set at liberty, and had leisure to speculate on the character of his new attendant as he walked away to his café—speculations which terminated in these few words, muttered half audibly, and with an expression of considerable misgiving,—

"I hope he mayn't turn out a bore!"

Trelane had received a letter as he left the hotel, and while he sat in the café waiting for his dinner, he took it out and began to read it. The letter was from Trelane's eldest sister. This lady was some five or six years the major's senior. She was single and living at home, where, now that the infirmities of age were a little asserting their hold upon her mother, most of the household duties devolved upon her.

"My dearest Henry," the letter began, "mamma has commissioned me, as she is not very well and very tired, to answer your dear letter, which she received, as you intended she should, upon the morn-

ing of her sixty-ninth birthday. I knew you would not forget to write as usual. But mamma is fussing herself very much, and so is papa a little, and so is Jane very much, and so is Edward, and so would be Eleanor, and Isabel, and Fred, if they were here, and so last of all am *I*, because, though your letter is a dear letter, and a nice letter, and a long letter, and an amusing letter, you yet say in it so little about yourself, so little of what you are or have been doing, or of what your plans are for the future, or how it happens that instead of going on to try the effects of a 'more genial climate,' as the newspapers say, on your health, you remain all this time at Paris, or, still more wonderful, at Versailles. I remember going there once, and thinking it just the dullest place I ever was in in my life. Oh, Henry, my grave old heroic warrior of a younger brother, I wonder if you have fallen in love! Papa says he is sure you have, and that nothing, unless, as he discourteously words it, 'there is a woman in the case,' could keep a sensible man more than six hours in the town of Versailles. But I never will believe that my dear, old, solemn, particular, fastidious Henry would turn his back on all his own countrywomen, and go over the channel to fall in love with ——, but no, I won't even talk of such a thing.

"But, seriously, Henry dear, what are you doing, and what are you going to do? You left us because

you said your health required a change, and you were going to try all sorts of southern climates and wonderful medicated baths; and then you only go as far as Paris, and stick there for nearly two months. Let me tell you, Mr. Major, that it is but a poor compliment to your own home and its attractiveness. I begin to think that you were only tired after all of the old house and the dull company in it, and that you made that health of yours an excuse to get away from both the one and the other. And, by-the-by, *I* never could see that there was much the matter with your health. I believe that those regimental doctors abroad receive a regular salary from the officers for giving them certificates of bad health whenever they want them. But come, I won't scold you or the regimental doctors or anybody else any more, but proceed to give you the news, as a good correspondent should. . . . ."

Here there follows a large amount of family news and local gossip, in which I am afraid the reader could hardly be expected to take much interest, so we will pass that portion of the letter over and take it up again nearer to its termination.

"Of course we drank mamma's health on her birthday, and made merry as well as we could; but somehow or other, as I daresay you will remember, that day is never a very happy one with us. Dear mamma is still as unable as ever to shake off the remembrance of that other anniversary which the

day brings round. She always talks of our poor brother Alfred, and how it was on that day that she saw him for the last time when he came to take leave before he joined his ship. I never knew her dwell upon the subject so much as she did on this last occasion. 'This day nineteen years,' she said, 'and I remember it as well as if it was yesterday, and how he came into my room to say good-by to me alone. "Mother," he said, "don't bear any malice against that poor, wretched girl. If you could have seen her as I did, you would have said that her greatest enemy would have been satisfied with the bitterness of her suffering. Poor Rachel," he said, "try, mother, to forgive her as completely as I do." And then he got up, and I looked once into his beautiful noble face, and then he went away, and my son Alfred was dead to me from that day, for I never saw him more.' Henry! what an impression that miserable affair has left behind it! As to my mother, I sometimes think it is never wholly out of her thoughts; as for me, you know, I was twenty years old on that day, which we have always since looked upon as virtually the day of Alfred's death, and of course I remember every word that was spoken. And you, Henry dear, I recollect, were home for the Christmas holidays, and though you were only about fourteen or fifteen—were you?—you used to say that you wished you had the power to kill that Italian who brought all

this misery about, and that you would do so if you ever met with him. And, oh, Henry! I remember, too, that in your boyish fury you cursed that poor miserable Rachel, who had been the cause of your brother's sorrow—cursed her and all her race, past, present, and to come. Do you ever dream of all that time now, Henry dear, as you told me you used to do in India, whenever the fever came upon you? But why should I go on with these miserable remembrances? I cannot think why I have said so much, but somehow or other the thing has been haunting me lately quite unreasonably, and that, I suppose, is to be my excuse for trying to make you unhappy also.

"And now, major, you are to go away to M. Disderi's and have a *carte de visite* portrait done of yourself, and mind you smile, and present your left side, which is the best, to the instrument, and then send me over a very good impression. And as to the original, the sooner he follows his portrait the better, and comes back to be made much of and petted and taken care of in his home. And mind you bring me something from Paris, but remember—and I'm in earnest—if it costs more than a franc, I won't have it. . . . ."

Trelane folded up the letter from which we have thus largely extracted, and returned it to his pocket-book. His dinner was finished, he had not felt much appetite that day, and still he sat where he

was in profound meditation. His sister's letter had taken his thoughts back to the events of which that letter spoke, and he seemed to find it almost as hard as his correspondent had done to turn to other things. That dream too. Yes, he had had that dream again, and lately, but when? How lately? No, he could not answer that, and as often as he tried to do so, he felt a curious sensation in his mind, as if, like the works of some piece of machinery, it had *stopped*. He could remember things that had happened long ago, and recent things well enough; but there seemed to be a blank place somewhere, and connected with that blank place was the dream, and connected with it also was, or seemed to be, his recent severe illness. From thoughts such as these our Englishman passed on to others of a similar kind, and some of the different events of the last six weeks or two months were called up before him to be pondered over while he was in this reflective mood.

It is in the experience of almost every one who has thought or observed at all, that the ordinary course by which the changes in our lives are brought about is slow and gradual in its working, and that we are shifted from one phase to another of existence by almost imperceptible degrees. There is no doubt of this. There is also, however, no doubt that there come periods in a man's career when a sort of compensatory swiftness of action is for a short time brought

to bear upon his life, and when the events, which it may be have been a long time in the leading up to, follow each other so quickly, and the machinery by which they are regulated works so rapidly, that we can hardly understand or realize from day to day the changes which are taking place in our destinies. It is so with public as well as private affairs. The leaven is long in the working. The tyranny of a despot presses harder day by day, new exactions are levied, new cruelties are exercised, the load is increasing hair by hair upon the camel's back; suddenly some individual sufferer fires a gun off, the revolution breaks out, and in a couple of days the country that was an empire becomes a republic, and he who ruled it a headless corpse.

And now a time had arrived in the history of Trelane when a great move was making in his fate—when changes were pushing one another on with unusual celerity. How far back, quite in a remote distance, seemed the time, only two months ago, when he was last at home! What a different element had been infused into his career since then! How impossible was a return to that home, of which he had lately thought so little, till the enterprise in which he was now embarked had been pushed further, even to an extremity—till he had found once more this Madeleine d'Elmar—till he had discovered who she really was—till he could know what was the nature of the hold which d'Elmar seemed to possess

over all her actions, and how far it was agreeable to this young English girl to be so utterly under the control of a man whom every hour Trelane mistrusted more and more! And these things discovered, these questions settled—what afterwards?

But that was a question which Trelane did not put to himself. He sat long in his place pondering about many things, till at last, looking at his watch, he found that it was time for him to go. He had one or two purchases to make, and if he waited longer the shops would be shut.

As our Englishman rose to go, his glance happened to be directed—or to direct itself, for our eyes are free agents in their first movements—towards a certain small table which stood in one corner of the room, and there he beheld, seated over the débris of a finished meal, and with a newspaper in his hand, his acquaintance of the morning, Monsieur le Lieutenant Tronchet. The lieutenant was not reading his newspaper at the moment of Trelane's rising up, but appeared, on the contrary, to have his eyes fixed on our Englishman himself. Directly, however, that he found that this last had observed him, he seemed suddenly to light upon an article of the intensest interest, for he became so much absorbed in the print before him that he never lifted his eyes from off it at all—no, not while Trelane was paying his bill, and putting on his over-coat, nor even when

he finally left his table, and passed close by the lieutenant's position on his way to the door.

Now there was nothing very remarkable in this coincidence, after all. On the contrary, it happens continually that we meet people whom we have not known before, once, and then go on meeting them for a time continually, just as it also happens that on a certain day we run against some old friend whom we have not seen for years, and then we do nothing else but knock up against him every day for a fortnight. For things happen in this world in phases, and it is no use saying that they don't. Still Trelane was a little staggered by this meeting, and though he tried for some time to persuade himself that it was a mere chance, and a thing that might happen to anybody at any time, he yet did find himself, as he walked about the Paris arcades making the purchases which he required for his journey, reverting in thought over and over again to this same Lieutenant Tronchet.

When Trelane had got all the things that he required, he went back to the hotel, and straight upstairs to his room. There was Monsieur Morlot established at the table exactly where our Englishman had left him. The medicine-chest, it is true, was put aside, but the little books which Trelane had before observed were spread out before him. There was also a gum-bottle and several small pieces of paper, some of which this remarkable man

seemed to have been fixing on the leaves of each of these account-books in such wise, that sticking out beyond the limits of the book itself, these small markers—they were all labelled—enabled him to refer to any division of the book which he might want. Monsieur Morlot rose when Trelane entered.

"You have had some dinner, I hope," said the latter.

"Monsieur, I have dined. Will monsieur kindly audit the accounts?"

Trelane looked mechanically at the little book which M. Morlot presented to him. There were altogether four of these little volumes, and, as has been said, the labels which marked the position of each classified heading stuck out beyond the margin of the books themselves. As Trelane read these inscriptions, which were, of course, in French, and were much abbreviated, he could hardly restrain a smile. Paraphrased in English, the inscriptions on the markers ran something thus:—hotel expenses, ho. ex.: tavern do.: tav. do.; washing was expressed by a simple w.; locomotion was loco.; medicine was rendered med.; gratuities, gra.; wages, wag.; stationery, sta.; clothing, clo.; and sundries—last refuge of the un-businesslike—lost its final syllable and became sun.

The audit solicited by M. Morlot was not a very arduous one. The leaf presented to Trelane's gaze contained just one very small entry at the very top of

the page which was dedicated to tavern expenses or tav. do., and ran thus: "Dinner of Jacques Morlot, 75 c." Having exhibited this, M. Morlot turned to the leaf labelled gratuities, and there was inscribed "Garçon, 10c."

"What!" cried Trelane; "do you mean to say that you have been eating a dinner which only cost seventy-five centimes, fifteen sous, five sous less than a franc: sevenpence-halfpenny, English?" he added to himself.

"Monsieur, that, and two sous for the waiter, was the amount of my expenditure."

"But, my good friend, you must have been poisoned; why on earth did you not dine here at the hotel?"

"Monsieur, the hotel charges are monstrous; had I dined here, more than four times the amount I have paid would have been set down to the account of monsieur."

Trelane had not seen much of French servants, and this anxiety on the part of the servant to save the master's purse was new and bewildering to him. The *esprit de corps* of foreign domestics is all on the side of the master who keeps them; in England it is just the other way, and the sympathy of even good servants is with the individual with whom the master happens to have dealings. In fact he seems to delight in making you spend as much money as possible.

Trelane's meditations were interrupted by a question from his faithful attendant.

"Will monsieur have the goodness to recount what he has spent since I had the honour to enter his service?"

"My good fellow," said the Englishman; "you really must not expect me to fall into this system of account-keeping. It is a thing I never did in my life. No, you may enter anything you spend on my account, as much as you like; and I hope I shall never see so small an amount again put down for a dinner; but as for me, I really must ask you to excuse me, once for all."

Directly he had spoken, Trelane was half sorry for what he had said. An expression of the profoundest misery and the most abject disappointment came upon M. Morlot's countenance.

"As monsieur wills it," he said.

Trelane watched his attendant as he slowly and regretfully casts his eyes over the different labels which he had so carefully affixed to the edges of the leaves, and closed the books and softly placed them side by side previous to putting them away. Our Englishman had a gentle heart, and when he saw what a sad expression the old fellow wore, now that he was crossed in his hobby, when he thought of that seventy-five centime entry for a dinner; and when he remembered what a small thing after all was wanted of him, he broke down altogether and cried out in a cheery tone:—

"Well, Monsieur Morlot, on second thoughts, I don't know but what you're right. Open the books again, and I'll try and remember what I've spent."

Well, well, I hope these small acts of mercy go for something in a man's account! But, then, think of the small cruelties which most of us have to set against them.

To see M. Morlot open all the books again, and, dipping his pen in the ink, look up eagerly to catch the items of the Englishman's expenditure as he threw them to him, was a sight of mixed pathos and comedy.

"Dinner," said Trelane; he was rather ashamed of the amount, though it was nothing for Paris: "six francs fifty centimes."

Monsieur Morlot turned gravely to the tav. do. division and made the entry.

"Oh, by-the-by, I forgot the .waiter," cried Trelane.

"Monsieur, that is entered in another department, under the heading 'gratuities.'"

"Garçon, fifty centimes."

Morlot looked rather bewildered at such munificence; but he entered the sum, and Trelane went on.

"Travelling pouch to strap round body, fifteen francs."

"I could have got one for monsieur for six francs fifty," remarked M. Jacques.

"Twelve pocket-handkerchiefs, sixty francs."

"Mon Dieu! what a sum," groaned the economist.

"An umbrella, thirty francs."

"Worse and worse," said M. Morlot, as he turned to the sundries.

"A box of tooth-powder, two francs," continued our hero, smiling.

"Ah, that must have been at an English chemist's, *I'm* sure," remarked the other, in a cynical tone. "Is there anything else, monsieur?" he added.

"Let me see," said Trelane; "no, I think that's all. Stop, no; there is just one thing more; a sponge, fifteen francs."

"Just heavens!" cried the accountant-general. "In every single instance, monsieur has been cheated to an extent that passes belief; but in this last"—and he stopped for want of adequate words.

Next morning Trelane and his companion were at the terminus of the railway in good time. While Monsieur Morlot looked after the luggage, Trelane waited in the line of the passengers, who were gradually approaching the pigeon-hole from which the tickets were issued. At length his turn came, and he asked for two tickets, a first and a second class, for Bourges. Directly he had done so, he happened—though he hardly knew why—to turn suddenly round; there was Monsieur Tronchet standing just outside the barrier, with his neck stretched forward, listening with all his might.

The eyes of the two men met, and Monsieur le Lieutenant Tronchet, with a smile of a more atrocious character than ever, raised his military cap, and made a most profound and servile bow.

"Bon voyage, monsieur, bon voyage," said the lieutenant, with another smile; and with that he turned himself about, and in another moment was lost in the crowd.

CHAPTER II.

A JOURNEY OF A STRANGE AND NOVEL DESCRIPTION.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the particulars of so common-place an affair as a journey by railroad from Paris to a town some hundred and fifty miles distant.

Of course the subject which principally occupied the thoughts of our Englishman was that apparition at the booking-office of the ill-favoured countenance of Lieutenant Tronchet. Dwelling upon that and upon the fact of the same gentleman's presence in the *café* the night before, it was hardly possible for Trelane to come to any other conclusion than that which marked the gallant lieutenant as something little better than a spy. The conviction that Alexis had set his friend to watch the Englishman's movements was, indeed, well nigh irresistible.

It was, however, pretty certain that Lieutenant Tronchet had confined himself to ascertaining in what direction Trelane was going, and had not

attempted to follow him. Our Englishman got down several times in the course of the journey, and examined very carefully, and as far as he could, the different passengers by the train, but he could see nothing of the lieutenant.

Bourges is a long day's journey from Paris, and when Trelane arrived at his destination, it was too late to do anything in pursuit of the object he had in view. The great Hôtel de la France received both himself and M. Morlot, and after the latter had carefully balanced the day's accounts, it was not long before both master and man were fast asleep.

Next morning Trelane commenced his researches, and in these he found a most valuable coadjutor in Monsieur Morlot, a person of great astuteness and penetration, and at the same time one who was surrounded with a certain air of mystery, which gave him in the eyes of those among whom he prosecuted his inquiries, something of the air of an agent of police—a class of persons highly respected over the water. As far as the first stages of the inquiry went, but few difficulties presented themselves. Of course M. Morlot began by examining the authorities at the Hôtel de la France itself, endeavouring to find out whether two ladies, answering in name and description to the objects of his search, had been there recently. The Hôtel de la France is an immense establishment, and it took M. Morlot some time to satisfy himself completely

that no such persons as Madame d'Elmar and her niece had stayed there. He was, however, at last convinced, and then he betook himself to that other and rival establishment which goes by the name of the Hôtel de Paris.

Here he was not long in discovering that two ladies, answering in every respect to the description of Madame d'Elmar and her niece, had passed a couple of nights, about three weeks or a month ago. They had removed from the hotel, it seemed, to a lodging in the town, and there was little doubt, the maître d'hôtel said, that the man who drove them would remember where he put them down, and so Monsieur Morlot would be able to trace these ladies to his entire satisfaction.

There were really no difficulties in M. Morlot's way. The coachman's memory was in the freshest and most vigorous condition. He remembered driving the two ladies and the bonne to their destination as well as if it had happened yesterday. They went, he said, to a small house overlooking the grand promenade on the outskirts of the town. He would give M. Morlot the direction. The man was as good as his word, and M. Morlot soon returned to his master with the information that the two ladies, of whom he was in search, were inhabiting a small house in the Place de la Regence, No. 14.

And now that it actually did seem to be a probable

thing that Trelane would soon have an opportunity of once more meeting with Madeleine d'Elmar, a certain sense of the awkwardness that must of necessity attend such a meeting was not slow in finding its way into the Englishman's mind. Had he any right to pursue these ladies after they had so evidently shown their wish to keep out of his way? Was he not in danger of finding himself in what is called a false position? Nay, was he not even exposing himself to a risk of insult? Then he had not seen, or communicated with, these ladies since that day when, in the fever of an irritability produced by illness, and acting under something very like a sense of injury, he had so abruptly left the shelter of Madame d'Elmar's roof. Would not a meeting, the first after that sudden change of residence, have of necessity much of awkwardness attending it? To set against all these misgivings, Trelane had just one argument, but it was a very simple and powerful one—he *must* see Madeleine again. He must find out whether she herself wished that all intercourse should cease between them, or whether she was simply powerless in the hands of her aunt and Alexis d'Elmar, and under their influence acting against her own inclination. And once for all, also, he desired to ascertain what that influence of d'Elmar's was based upon, and whether this man had any hold upon the girl herself, other than that of a sort of self-

constituted guardian, to whose advice she was compelled to listen. So Trelane set off for the Place de la Regence, a prey to a considerable amount of misgiving, but with a fixed purpose, nevertheless. M. Morlot, who had already found out the locality, went with him in the capacity of guide.

These two passed along the pleasant streets of Bourges, and by its pretty appetizing market, and so got at last to the outskirts of the town, and stopped at No. 14 in the Place de la Regence.

Our major might have spared himself all his misgivings as to what might be the nature of his interview with Madame d'Elmar and her niece. The landlady of No. 14, who confronted him as soon as he had put his foot across the threshold, did not leave him long in doubt as to what had become of her lodgers.

"Ah, monsieur," she said, in answer to his inquiries, "the lady, her niece, and her servant, all left this morning before break of day."

Trelane was speechless. He felt now how much he had depended on that interview which he had dreaded so much.

"Their departure," the good woman continued, "was very sudden, and had taken place before the expiration of the term for which they had taken the apartments—which they had paid for honourably, of course——"

"Was there any motive for that sudden departure?" Trelane interrupted, hastily.

"Monsieur, on the previous afternoon Madame d'Elmar received a letter, she" (the landlady) "believed it was a telegraphic despatch. Immediately after its reception, madame had announced her intended departure, and had, indeed, been busy packing up during the greater part of the night."

"And have you any idea where they are gone?" asked Trelane, eagerly.

"Ah, monsieur," replied the landlady, "I know no more than the dead."

"But did they not go by railroad?"

"Monsieur, I think not. It was a carriage of Monsieur Legrand's."

"Who is Monsieur Legrand?"

"Monsieur, he is a horse-dealer in the town, who also lets out carriages. The carriage was packed as if for a long journey, and it did not go in the direction of the station."

"But, madame, did you not hear any direction given when they started?" asked our Englishman.

"Monsieur, none whatever. The coachman was closeted with madame and mademoiselle in the salon for some time before they set off, and it was then, probably, that he received his instructions."

Trelane remained silent. There could be no doubt now that these two ladies absolutely shrank from the chance of meeting him. But why? Was it

their own wish, then, to avoid him, or were they acting under some influence which they dared not resist?

Trelane was fully convinced that this last supposition was the right one. That letter, which was, no doubt, as this good woman supposed, a telegraphic despatch, came beyond question from d'Elmar. His friend and emissary, Lieutenant Tronchet, had heard Trelane asking for a ticket for Bourges; he had returned to his principal, and this last had at once telegraphed to his relative, bidding her leave the town without loss of time, and leave it in a way which should make it difficult to trace the direction in which she had gone.

Trelane was interrupted in making these reflections by the landlady of the house, who, speaking perhaps with an eye to business, said,—

"Would monsieur like to see the apartments; they are just as madame left them, a good deal disordered; but they are the prettiest apartments in the town, for all that, and have a charming view over the Place."

Trelane followed this honest woman almost mechanically, and soon found himself in a salon on the first floor, which, if it did not carry out the vaunt of its proprietress, was yet quite pretty enough to justify her in a high tone of eulogium when speaking of it.

There were not wanting evidences that the room

had been recently occupied. The furniture was displaced. Pieces of rope, used in cording boxes, lay about here and there. The remains of a meal, evidently breakfast, lay on the table. There was a "Galignani's Messenger" lying on one of the sofas, and on a small table drawn near to the window, and by the side of which was a little fauteuil covered with deep crimson velvet, was a portion of a tangled skein of cotton, such as ladies use in working on cambric. Trelane took it up gently in his hand. He had frequently seen Madeleine use such cotton when she sat at work in the old rooms at Versailles during the period of our hero's convalescence.

All this time the worthy lady of the house was entertaining our Englishman with more praises of her apartments, of which he did not hear one word, while Monsieur Morlot, who had not hitherto spoken, but had listened very attentively to everything that was to be heard, and observed everything that was to be seen with equal assiduity, was poking about the room, apparently with no object but the gratification of an inquisitive nature.

"Morlot, what are you doing?" at length inquired his master, suddenly becoming conscious that his eccentric attendant was on his knees before the fireplace grubbing among the ashes of the recently-extinguished fire.

"Monsieur, I am seeking for traces of these ladies, something that might help to guide monsieur in his

researches. Stay," he continued, rising and coming towards the major with some small object in his hand, "I almost think I have found something now."

It was only a square piece of card nearly consumed by fire, but on parts of which some indistinct writing was discernible.

"Bah!" continued this remarkable man, "this is not much, only it seems to indicate the department in which we should make our researches."

Trelane took the card from his attendant. It seemed to have been intended for a direction card to be placed on some article of luggage. Perhaps one more had been written than was intended. Perhaps the traveller who had inscribed it had resolved to do without labels altogether, in order the better to keep the direction of the intended journey a secret. At all events, the fire had done its work so well, that but very few letters remained in a decipherable condition. The words which could be made out or guessed at were on the top and bottom lines; all the central portion of the card had been destroyed. The document then read thus:—"Madame d'El . . . ." Here came a great black calcined space, and nothing more could be distinguished except upon the bottom line these fragmentary words,—"Dép . . . . . Cher."

"How do you mean?" asked Trelane, "that this can be of any use to us?"

"Monsieur," replied Morlot, "it indicates at any

rate the department in which we should search, which is, in fact, that in which we at present stand."

"That is a wide field of search," said Trelane, "even supposing this fragment of card to be what we think it is. However, there seems to be little else to depend upon. By-the-by, madame," he continued, turning to the landlady, "where can we find the house of this Monsieur Legrand from whom the carriage was hired?"

"Sir, it is close by, Rue Neuve, No. 7."

Our major glanced just once more round the room, and then resisting madame's entreaties that he would view the other apartments which made up the suite, he took his leave, and, accompanied by his faithful attendant, went off in search of Monsieur Legrand.

The tidings furnished by this gentleman were discouraging in the extreme. A carriage had certainly been supplied by him to Madame d'Elmar, who had been a customer of his during her residence at Bourges, but madame had taken the carriage for a month, and had not specified in what direction she meant to travel. It mattered not to him (Monsieur Legrand); the monthly hire of the vehicle and two horses had been paid beforehand; his own servant went with it in capacity of coachman, and his wages and keep were to come out of the English lady's pocket. More than this Monsieur Legrand knew

not, but if the English gentleman chose to wait for the expiration of the month, it was possible that some more information might be attainable from the coachman, who would by that time have returned with the britscha, unless, indeed, Madame d'Elmar continued to hire it, which was always possible, as the driver was Monsieur Legrand's confidential servant, and had entire liberty to treat with the lady for the hire of the carriage and horses for any length of time for which she might require them.

With this scant amount of assistance, Trelane was obliged to content himself. Nor did even the diligent and continued cross-examination through which Monsieur Legrand was put by the subtle Jacques Morlot, bring any additional matter to light. And for this there was a very good reason. Monsieur Legrand had really spoken the truth, and had revealed all that he knew of the affair.

And now what was to be done? The enormous pains which it was evident that d'Elmar was at to keep these two ladies from having any intercourse with Trelane, or even, perhaps, with anybody else, were shown at every turn, and our hero could not but gather that some evil motive must be actuating the Frenchman in the course which he was pursuing. Trelane was determined to carry out the enterprise which he had undertaken, and the obstacles which came in his way perhaps even—considering

the nature of the man—added new force to his resolution. And some considerable obstacles did really seem to lie in his path. Bourges was an unfortified town, and there were no gates at which to make inquiry with regard to the passage of the carriage in which Madame d'Elmar and her niece had left the town. Then there are no turnpikes in France, a capital arrangement in every respect, except that it renders it more difficult to trace persons who are travelling by road than it is to keep them in view in countries where those nuisances called toll-gates abound. The carriage had been hired for a month, which looked as if these ladies had had it in contemplation to make some sort of tour rather than to remain stationary in any particular place. But then that card seemed—if any trust was to be placed in it—to point the other way, and to indicate that there was some fixed spot, and that within the limits of the Departement du Cher, to which the travellers intended to retire.

Monsieur Morlot's abilities were now tested to the utmost. He was despatched to the railway station to inquire if any luggage had been booked there in the name of Madame d'Elmar. He was sent back to the house in the Place de la Regence to inquire in which direction the horses' heads were turned when the carriage left the door. Nay, he even made inquiry in the outskirts of the town along the principal lines of road, with a vague hope that some

one might have noticed the carriage passing out of the town.

After all these researches had proved useless, Trelane found himself reduced to the necessity of adopting one of three courses. He must either give the whole project up, or wait where he was till the expiration of the month, in the hope of getting some information from the driver of Monsieur Legrand's britscha; or he must set off at once himself and explore this department of France as thoroughly as he could. This last alternative was that which he determined to adopt. The other two were not to be thought of. We have already seen how resolved our Englishman was not to abandon the undertaking which he had once entered on; while as to remaining inactive at Bourges for a whole month, he felt that he could not bear it. Besides, he could always return there when the month had expired, if, in the meantime, his researches had been unsuccessful.

Having determined, then, that this journey should be undertaken, the next thing to do was to decide what would be the best manner of carrying it out. Many consultations took place between master and man on this subject before any plan of action could be defined; but at length it was settled that the best of all modes of proceeding would be, to explore the different carriage-roads which led away from Bourges to as great a distance as might be comprehended in a

day's journey, as by that means they must surely find out where the travellers had passed the first night, after which it would probably be easy to trace them in the same manner from one resting-place to another.

As to the mode of travelling, that again was a difficulty. Trelane had not yet sufficiently recovered his strength after his recent illness to be able to engage in a walking journey, and at the same time he felt a sense of impatience, and a desire for action, which made the idea of being shut up in a carriage eminently distasteful to him. The only other alternative then was riding, and this—a manner of travelling with which the major was not unfamiliar—was at length, and after some opposition on the part of Monsieur Morlot, finally decided on. The fact is that Monsieur Morlot had misgivings on two subjects: first as to his own ability to keep upon the back of a horse, even supposing himself once established there, and secondly as to the effect of horse-exercise upon the bottles in his medicine chest.

And now it was necessary, once more, to have recourse to Monsieur Legrand, and numerous and intricate, indeed, were the negotiations which took place in his stable-yard before it could be arranged that a couple of serviceable beasts, saddled and bridled, should be at the disposal of the English gentleman for the space of one calendar month from date of agreement. Of course, the "English gentle-

man" was to pay for the hire of the animals beforehand; and of course he was to leave a deposit in the hands of the master of the Hôtel de la France, fully equivalent—and perhaps a little more—to the value of the horses themselves.

Now some time had been consumed by the inquiries made by Monsieur Morlot in the neighbourhood of Bourges, and by these negotiations with Monsieur Legrand, so that it was only on the fourth day from that on which Trelane and his attendant arrived at Bourges, that at an early hour in the morning our Englishman descended into the stable-yard of the inn to see with his own eyes to the feeding and preparation of the two quadrupeds by whose aid he and Monsieur Morlot were to accomplish their undertaking. Hired horses are seldom animals of unlimited attractiveness; but Trelane had managed to get two of the best in Monsieur Legrand's stable; so, although the animal provided for Morlot was a sluggish and obstinate beast with rather dubious knees, it was quiet enough at any rate, which was the great thing, considering the small previous equestrian experience of his rider; while the horse, which was assigned to Trelane, though evidently an ill-conditioned beast, and bearing traces of previous overwork, was yet likely to prove, in the hands of a good horseman, a serviceable brute enough. Both horses were provided with capacious saddle-bags to contain the necessaries for the journey;

but when Morlot appeared, fully equipped, his master observed with some vexation, that the medicine chest was secured round his body by a strap which passed over his shoulder.

"Why, what have you got there?" asked Trelane.

"Monsieur cannot have forgotten the box of drugs which it was my privilege to exhibit to monsieur before leaving Paris."

"My good fellow," the major expostulated, good-humouredly, "I really don't think that will do. I am afraid the medicine-chest must be left behind."

"The medicine-chest left behind—abandon the medicine-chest—travel without *alkali volatile*, without ether, without bicarbonate of soda? Why, monsieur, you know not surely what you propose."

"But consider," urged Trelane; "if you take those things with you, you will most certainly break all the bottles to pieces through the motion of the horse, and then where will you be?"

Monsieur Morlot looked a little perplexed by this suggestion. At last he unstrapped his burden and lowering it to the ground, remained for a time lost in thought.

"I cannot abandon it," he said, in a mournful tone; "and my leeches, my pet leeches."

"The leeches," remarked Trelane, "are simply out of the question."

"Nay, then, monsieur," said the injured individual, "if the leeches are out of the question, I may as well

abandon all. I will take the necessaries of life though, cost what it cost." And so saying, this remarkable personage knelt down upon the ground and, selecting some of his favourite medicaments, wrapped them up in stockings and pocket-handkerchiefs and other soft articles, and stowed them about his person in the different pockets with which his attire was profusely decorated. Then, with a heavy sigh, he locked up the box once more and handed it, and the jar of leeches over, not without many injunctions, to the head-waiter, with whom he had run up something approaching to a friendship.

The dawn of a February day was just declaring itself when Major Trelane and his retainer rode out of the inn yard and through the quiet streets of Bourges. All sorts of workmen were going to their labours, and the market people were entering the town laden with many good things, with which to tempt the cautious French housewives. Our travellers were leaving Bourges by the road which bears away from the town in a north-easterly direction, and their place of destination was a small town, lying on the banks of the river Loire, and bearing the name of Sancerre. Trelane had selected four roads leading out of Bourges in different directions as those which it would be expedient to try first, viz: the north-east road just mentioned; the road proceeding due north, and leading to the village of Chapelle d'Angillon; the south road to Chateauneuf, and

St. Amand; and that which tended in a south-easterly direction by Dun le Roi to Charenton.

Trelane felt his spirits rise as he rode out of the town. The object of this journey in which he was engaging was one of supremest interest; the mode of travelling was peculiarly delightful to him; the renewed vitality too, which follows convalescence, was strong within him. In short, all things tended to make that start in the early morning a thing full of hope and enjoyment.

It is extremely doubtful whether these feelings were fully shared by his companion and attendant, Monsieur Morlot. That good gentleman by no means found himself at home on the back of a horse. It has been already mentioned that the animal selected for Monsieur Morlot's use had been chosen on account of its quietness, but it soon appeared that this prepossessing quality was to some extent counteracted, as good qualities too often are, by a defect of some importance to an unskilful rider; Mouton (which in consideration of his lamb-like qualities was this animal's name) was what is called a rough-goer. He was also a very broad animal; and these two characteristics combined proved somewhat discomposing to his rider. Now when a rough-goer and a bad horseman get together two results almost invariably follow: the equestrian's hat gets shaken down over his ears, and his unmentionables get worked up over his knees.

Monsieur Morlot was no exception to this rule, and when Trelane looked back after getting clear of the town to see how his faithful follower was getting on, he was seized with such a fit of laughter that he was obliged to pull his own horse up abruptly, lest he should absolutely roll off his back. Monsieur Morlot had no idea of relieving himself and his beast by rising in his stirrups, but was riding after the legitimate cavalry fashion, only with an infinitely looser seat, so that at every step taken by the docile Mouton his body was subjected to a shock that threatened to shake the very teeth out of his head. The effect of this violent bumping upon this unfortunate man's costume was precisely what might have been expected. His face was nearly invisible, for not only was his hat brought down so completely over his eyes that it was a matter of grave question whether it was possible for him to see, but the collar of his coat and neckcloth had got worked up in so extraordinary a manner that they almost rubbed against the brim of his hat. It must be mentioned besides, that the cuffs of Monsieur Morlot's coat had suddenly become so long that his hands were entirely concealed in the sleeves; while his trowsers on the other hand had wriggled themselves up to so remarkable an extent that his legs, which were so emaciated that there hardly seemed room for the bones, and which were encased in blue worsted stockings, were visible from the knee down

to the blucher boots, which jingled loosely in a pair of stirrups which might have been arranged expressly for the use of Edward Longshanks of royal memory. It must not be forgotten in completing this sketch of Monsieur Morlot's appearance on that particular morning, that his figure was additionally distorted by the presence of all sorts of abnormal humps and bosses dispersed over his body, and which were in fact occasioned by the enormous number of medicine bottles which, wrapped, as has been said, in different articles of attire, were distributed about his person.

It has been mentioned that Trelane had thought it expedient to pull up when he first caught sight of this extraordinary apparition, and now the hypothesis that Monsieur Morlot could not see—by reason of the derangement of his costume—was unmistakably confirmed; for instead of following his master's example, this worthy gentleman came trotting on with his reins dangling on his horse's neck, and would have jogged on apparently for the rest of the day if Mouton had not suddenly had it revealed to him that his stable companion was standing quite still, and that he might as well take the opportunity of enjoying a little of that repose which was so entirely congenial to his nature. This thought no sooner flashed across this intelligent animal's mind, than he acted upon it, and came to anchor so abruptly and so entirely without a previous reduc-

tion of his pace, that poor Morlot was flung forward upon his beast's neck, and only saved himself from falling bodily off by embracing that portion of Mouton's anatomy. At the moment of the performance of this feat, a sound as of the clinking of broken glass might have been heard emanating, as it appeared, from the interior of Monsieur Morlot's body.

"Grand ciel!" gasped Monsieur Morlot, clapping his hand to one of his numerous pockets, and speaking in a breathless voice; "it is the bicarbonate of soda!"

The poor man's despair at the thought of this accident and its possible results was so intense, that Trelane was fain to make some attempt to console him by pointing out that it was very fortunate that the drug in question was one so generally obtainable, and that there was hardly any village they could pass through where it would not be possible to get a fresh supply of it. Comfort being thus administered, and Monsieur Morlot having scraped together what fragments he could of this inestimable powder, in case he or his master should be seized with the pangs of indigestion on the high road, Trelane proceeded next to give his companion a few hints on horsemanship, and, above all, to initiate him in the noble art of rising in his stirrups.

Monsieur Morlot took to this new invention, as he called it, with surprising alacrity; indeed, he

experienced such relief from it, and found that it so materially alleviated the sufferings which he had previously endured, that the only difficulty now was to keep him down, so that what with the rough movements of Mouton and Monsieur Morlot's terror of coming in contact with the saddle, he would sometimes, for a considerable time, be found standing up in his stirrups altogether, and riding, at a very slow trot, in the attitude in which our jockeys generally appear as they pass the grand stand at Epsom.

As for the horse which Trelane bestrode, it has been called an ill-conditioned beast; but it is a grave question whether that term might not, with even more propriety, have been applied to those in whose possession the animal had always been. It was a nervous shrinking brute with ever shifting ears and glancing eyes. Its life had been a long strife and battle with mankind, and it had got into the habit of shrinking away from his touch, and at the same time serving him a nasty turn when opportunity offered. Our Englishman sat his horse like a centaur, and cared not for the worst he could do. He had chosen the beast in the stable because he saw there was work in him. And he was right. The horse, for his part, soon began to detect a new kind of master in Trelane, and the warfare between them became of a less serious sort with every day of their mutual acquaintance.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEARCH BEGUN.

TRELANE and his companion rode all that morning through the grim, wild, dreary, and delightful French country. They rode along avenues of poplars, along straight roads, by deserted canals, suicidal ponds, through small and squalid villages, the astonishment of whose inhabitants, as the travellers passed them by, was almost frenzied, till at last they reached a certain village half-way on their road, where they resolved to stop for some hours of rest.

It was here that our travellers experienced for the first time—because it was the first road-side place where they had made inquiries—a difficulty which had not been calculated on, and which added a good deal to their perplexities. They found that the people of the inn were curiously unwilling to admit that they could be of no assistance in this search. It was quite difficult to get a straightforward answer in the negative out of them. They seemed to want to have the honour and glory of

being in some way mixed up in this transaction, in which it is needless to say everybody in the place was vitally and profoundly interested. Trelane's inquiries were conducted something after this fashion. Selecting the principal out of that crowd of idlers, which in the French dominions is always ready to listen to, and take part in, any and every sort of discussion in which its opinions are not wanted, our Englishman would begin by inquiring "whether a carriage containing three persons (women) had put up there within the past week?" To this question it would be very difficult, indeed, to get an answer.

"What sort of carriage?" would be the inquiry of the gentleman who filled the combined offices of maître d'hôtel and cook. The answer would be that it was a britscha.

"Ah-h-h-h," with a face of inconceivable intelligence, and suggestive of volumes full of information, "a britscha! How many horses?"

"Two," Trelane would answer, eagerly, beginning to think that he saw daylight.

"Two—two horses," replies the cook, with his finger on his nose. "And the colour of the horses?"

"A white and a brown," is the answer, this piece of information having been obtained at starting from Monsieur Legrand.

"Two horses—white and brown. A man to drive, of course?"

"Of course."

"What aged man?"

"A man of middle-age, rather short, wearing a blue blouse over his other clothing, with black curly hair and a moustache, and a helmet-shaped cap."

All these particulars would be extracted from our Englishman by means of endless questions, and the two ladies and their servant would also have to be described at full length and very minutely. Then, and not till then, the maître d'hôtel would, gazing steadily into the Englishman's eyes, make this tremendous statement.

"Monsieur, it is at least four weeks since a carriage stopped here, and then it was the one horse vehicle of the gentleman who travels commercially for Messrs. Sarrazin and Cie., of Tours."

At this satisfactory stage of the inquiry, a few suggestive remarks would ordinarily be thrown in by some of the by-standers.

"Was it not possible," would be the suggestion of the wheelwright, who, in common with the rest of the local tradespeople, had abandoned business in order to be present during this impressive scene—"was it not possible that this carriage might have gone through the village without stopping to bait at all?"

"How could that be?" shrieks another member of the industrious classes. "Could a pair of horses

drive through from Bourges to Sancerre without resting on the road? Bah!"

"Well, who said they could? But was there not the auberge of the Veuve Gautier two miles farther on?"

"Ah, that was different. Monsieur must go on to the Veuve Gautier's. But hold, it was nonsense. Did the wheelwright, for an instant, believe that a carriage, such as had been described, could pass through the village by broad daylight and nobody see it?"

"Who said nobody saw it?" yells the wheelwright, at which there is a murmur of approbation from the by-standers.

"Did *you* see it?" shrieks the wheelwright's opponent. "Did anybody here present see it?"

In the midst of a general chorus of negatives a very old and shrivelled woman is observed to make a sign as if she had something to communicate.

"What is it?" they all fly round her as if they would eat her up. The Englishman's affair has become *their* affair in a twinkling. Nay, it seems as if they had taken it out of his hands altogether and as if he were no longer a principal in the matter at all.

"What is it, Mère Duval?"

"My grandson, Achille Duval," the old woman grumbles out; she is so old that her words are barely intelligible; "he has seen a carriage."

"Achille, Achille Duval saw a carriage," screams the chorus; "where is he? fetch him at once."

"Bah," remarks the wheelwright, contemptuously; "he is a crétin, a born idiot. What's the use of asking him?"

"He knows a carriage when he sees it as well as you do," mutters the old lady, with some indignation in her tone.

"Of course he does; fetch him here, Duval, fetch him without delay," cries the whole assembly, wheelwright excepted; and a dozen volunteers are off in search of the unfortunate child before Trelane can interpose to stop them.

A spectacle of dirt, disfigurement and disease, Achille is, when at length a lane is made for him to pass among the spectators, and he stands in a state of high glee and self-conceit before the English traveller. He is a capital witness, for he assents to every proposition; nor is the value of his testimony at all diminished, in the eyes of the by-standers, by the fact that it is delivered by a creature in a condition of almost epileptic mirth, and who drivels at the mouth as he attempts to speak. When, at length he retires in triumph with a piece of fifty centimes, as the reward of merit, he is quite the hero of the day, and is surrounded in no time by a crowd of courtiers of his own age, whose behaviour is deferential in the extreme.

Now all this is very perplexing to our Englishman,

but much less so to his French attendant, who, perhaps, because he *is* a French attendant, seems to have a wonderful power of estimating at its exact worth the evidence given by his worthy countrymen.

"Sir," remarked this judicious personage, at the close of the interview with Achille Duval, "all this that you have heard signifies nothing, nothing whatever. It will, however, be repeated wherever we stop so long as monsieur himself conducts the inquiry and rewards with pieces of fifty centimes the different givers of evidence. If monsieur would not mind handing the affair over to me, I think that a saving both in time, speech, and money might probably be effected."

"Yes," replied Trelane, "that is likely enough; but the question is whether by discouraging the ardour of these witnesses we might not lose some evidence which might turn out to be of real importance."

"As monsieur pleases; but I think that in time monsieur will find it necessary to change his plan of operations."

When the midday rest was over and the two unwilling animals who were to carry our travellers and their luggage were led forth from the stable, the excitement in the inn yard became very great. It was evident that all work had been suspended for the day, for the loiterers who had assembled when

Trelane arrived were all about the inn door three hours afterwards when he prepared to depart. They were all ready with their advice, and some were free in their strictures on the mode in which our Englishman was conducting his search, suggesting how much more hopeful it would have been if he had gone to work in a manner altogether different; or if even now he would take advice and begin again upon a new principle. At last, when Trelane had fairly broken away from them all, the wheelwright entreated a hearing, in a tone so full of mystery, that even if he had not maintaind a strong hold on the major's stirrup-leather, it would have been difficult to have shaken him off.

"Monsieur," he whispered, "I will tell you where your mistake has been. As you came from Bourges to this place, did you happen to observe a little narrow road which diverged from the main highway at a point where there is a small duck-pond belonging to the farm of the Beau Marais? Monsieur should have pursued that small and narrow route—nay even now—"

Even now this English gentleman was bent upon getting on, so having with some difficulty succeeded in detaching the wheelwright from his stirrup-leather, he set spurs to his horse and galloped out of the village, feeling a strong inclination to follow Monsieur Morlot's advice and hand the inquiry over to that astute and economical personage.

Our travellers were not long in arriving at the hostelry kept by the Veuve Gautier; but here they found the condition of affairs to be the very reverse of what they had just met with. The amiable proprietress of the establishment known by the name of the Ecu de France, being perhaps disgusted that the Englishman seemed to have paused at the door rather with the intention of asking a few questions than of spending a few francs, was uncommunicative in the extreme. As to answering any questions addressed to her from the saddle, that was evidently entirely out of the question. She was deaf, monsieur must come inside, there was excellent accommodation, the animals could be put up, there were refreshments. Trelane, however, was in a hurry to get on, and was not to be tempted by this aged siren, who in her turn was equally resolute.

"A carriage with ladies in it—ah, what did she know about such matter? it might have passed by, or it might not. Did such a vehicle stop?—ah well, it might, she had no memory. If monsieur would step inside she would consult her nephew who would be home in half-an-hour. He was the one for memory and for information—knew everything, could tell monsieur anything he wanted to know on any subject, didn't matter what. As for her, she could not say, though she had a sort of indistinct recollection of some ladies who had expressed an opinion that the Ecu de France was

the very best inn, and its accommodations the very best accommodations they had ever met with. Let monsieur step inside and rest, her nephew would soon be at home and then——"

Trelane took a moment's consultation with his aide-de-camp, the result of which was not to increase his confidence in this venerable lady's statements, and which terminated in the abrupt departure of both the travellers, the Veuve Gautier screaming after them that she began to recollect, and that her memory was returning in all its vigour. Monsieur Morlot, however, was firm in his conviction that the old lady had nothing to tell, and as this opinion was entirely shared by his master, the two turned a deaf ear to this wily old woman, and rode off on their way to Sancerre.

In mercy to the exceeding agony which Monsieur Morlot was beginning to feel in the limbs and back, and which is a common effect of horse exercise upon persons unaccustomed to riding, our travellers, during this latter part of their day's journey, advanced at so slow a pace, that it began to get dark some time before they approached the little town towards which they were journeying. Trelane had no objection to this slow progress, or to travelling in the dark. He knew that they could not travel further than Sancerre that evening, and that the inquiries which he had to make when he got there would occupy but a short time. With loosened bridle he rode slowly on a

little in advance of his companion, and gave himself up to a full enjoyment of the scene before him, darkening, as it was, moment by moment, in the gathering twilight. In that semi-obscurity, the solitariness of these little-visited regions seemed more remarkable even than it had been earlier in the day. Even the cantonniers or road-menders had left their work, and few, indeed, were the peasants who, returning from their labours, gave the travellers "good-night" as they passed. Woods, and vineyards, and corn-fields, lay now shrouded in a gray mist, which made it difficult to separate one from the other.

At last far off—though much less so than it appeared—a faintly twinkling light asserted itself in the distance, and then it was not long before another showed itself, and yet another, whereat Monsieur Morlot began to pluck up courage a little, and made an abortive attempt to sit upright upon his horse, hinting moreover that a slight quickening of the pace at which our travellers were advancing was a thing that might legitimately be thought of. And so they jogged along till they came into the town itself, and it was not long before they pulled up at the inn of the Grand Cerf, Trelane's horse signalizing the event by shying straight across the street at sight of the ostler's lanthorn.

At Sancerre there was the same difficulty in

getting a plain answer to a plain question as there had been at the village on the road, while quite as many questions were propounded by the landlord, who seemed to find it much easier to ask questions himself than to answer those which were put to him. At last, and by the aid of Monsieur Morlot, who stuck to his points with inconceivable pertinacity, it became pretty tolerably clear that, at any rate, the Grand Cerf had received no ladies travelling in a carriage with two horses, one white and the other brown; though even when this *was* elicited, the landlord did not by any means seem to be at the end of his resources. His object evidently was to keep Trelane as long as possible under his roof, and with this view he suggested a series of proceedings, all necessitating a nightly return to Sancerre, which, if they had been engaged in by our Englishman, would have kept him at least a fortnight in the neighbourhood. To-morrow the travellers might commence their researches in the town itself, for though the Grand Cerf was the only hotel, with any pretensions to the name, in the place, the landlord yet admitted that there was a sort of obscure ale-house called the Hôtel de la Poste—which Trelane afterwards discovered to be much the best inn of the two—where these misguided ladies might in a moment of hallucination have taken up their quarters. The town thoroughly searched from end to end—and monsieur would

remember that there were people within its magic circle who let lodgings, with whom he would do well to communicate—the town thoroughly examined, and *en passant* it would be well to visit some of its objects of curiosity, monsieur would doubtless consult the agents of police, and guide himself by their advice. He would then visit some of the principal villages on the bank of the River Loire, which were within easy reach of Sancerre, and very likely spots, indeed, to be adopted as hiding-places. In short, this good gentleman drew out a programme as long as would in all probability have been the bill which would have followed its adoption, and ended by expressing his readiness to favour our Englishman with any further advice of which he might stand in need, when what he had already suggested had been thoroughly carried out.

At last it fortunately became high time for this disinterested person to absent himself for a while, in order that he might look after the dinner which was just going to be served up, and so Trelane got rid of him. The meal over, our Englishman summoned Monsieur Morlot, who had also been solacing himself in another sphere with a sufficient supply of creature comforts, and the two set off to get what information they could at the Hôtel de la Poste, or elsewhere. Stumbling along the uneven pavement of this primitive place on a very dark

night, our travellers might certainly be described as engaged in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties; but still they did pursue it, and were rewarded by getting so much information as led them to the irresistible conclusion that they were altogether on a wrong scent, and that the sooner they tried back and made a fresh start on some other track the better. In order, however, to get an additional chance of making the discovery on which he was bent, Trelane resolved to return to Bourges by another road, descending the left bank of the Loire to a place called Sancergues, and so returning by an altogether different route.

Worn out with fatigue, so stiff with his long ride that he could scarcely move, Monsieur Morlot had out his books before he would hear of retiring for the night, and made his entries of the day's expenditure. Each particular payment was entered under its own peculiar heading, and then when this worthy financier had recorded what he himself had disbursed, came Trelane's turn for cross-examination.

"Monsieur," inquired the economist, entering the major's apartment, and respectfully standing before his master, pen in hand, "is it permitted to inquire what has been the expenditure of the day?"

Trelane uttered a low groan, for he was very tired, and pecuniary questions were those which interested him perhaps less than any others in the world.

"Really I don't know," he replied, presently; "let me see, I don't think there was anything."

Monsieur Morlot prepared to put up his books with a respectful bow, which, however, seemed to cost him considerable anguish of body.

"Monsieur is to be congratulated," he said, "on so happy a state of things."

"Stop, though," said the major, arresting his attendant as he was about to depart, "I think I gave away some money to some of those people who furnished us—or at any rate thought they did—with information."

"Ah! that is different," remarked Morlot; and he had referred to volume four, and got it open at the page marked "gratuities" in a trice.

"Yes, yes, I certainly did," said Trelane, making an effort to tax his memory. "Let me see, there was a cantonnier of whom I made inquiries before we reached our midday resting-place, I gave him half a franc."

"Fifty centimes!" was chronicled by Monsieur Morlot, and then came the usual muttered commentary,—"unnecessary."

"Then when we put up," the major continued, "and all those people took up our affairs with so much interest, I think I gave away some more. Yes, there was a two-franc piece for that miserable old woman—what was her name?—the Veuve Duval."

"Two pieces of twenty sous," wrote Monsieur Morlot. "But, sir, at this rate——"

"Then there was half-a-franc for the idiot," continued Trelane, disregarding all expostulation.

"Cinquante centimes," muttered our financier. "Gracious heavens! ten sous to an idiot!"

"Then there was half-a-franc again," the major went on, "to the boy who fetched the idiot, and five or six sous, I forget which, to his sister who helped him; and there were two francs to the waiter who showed himself a very obliging fellow, and a franc to a man who said he had been round to every house in the village to inquire whether any one had seen the carriage, and there was half-a-franc to a poor devil who said that if it had pleased the saints that he had seen the carriage his fortune would have been made, and—yes, I think that was all."

"But monsieur," expostulated Monsieur Morlot, who had at each of these items lifted his eyes up to the ceiling with a new expression of surprise and horror. "Monsieur, if the inquiry is to be prosecuted after this fashion, the amount expended will be something——"

"Oh, stop. I remember," interrupted Trelane, who had been in search of a fugitive recollection. "There was the wheelwright, to whom, as a respectable tradesman, I could not offer less than five francs."

This was too much. Monsieur Morlot closed his

book, placed it with its companion volumes, bound them all neatly together with a strap, removed his spectacles, inserted them in their shagreen case, and addressed his temporary master as follows:—

"Monsieur le major, things have now arrived at a crisis beyond which they can proceed no longer. I have no wish to dwell on anything that I have done; but it is no secret to monsieur that I have, at a moment's notice, and at the request of a master to whose interests I am devoted, and who is himself an economist of no mean order—I have left, I say, a service which, entirely suited me, and myself a man of stationary habits, have identified my fortunes with those of a gentleman whose way of life is at present, to say the least of it, somewhat locomotive. Unaccustomed to equestrian exercise," and here, in slightly changing his position, Monsieur Morlot was unable to repress a slight scream, "unaccustomed to horse exercise, and naturally somewhat nervous in matters connected with an animal whose nature I am inclined to mistrust, I have mounted on horseback and followed monsieur over miles and miles of country, enduring tortures which may not be described; and which, even now, when the exercise is over, continue, I may say, unabated. All these things I have done, and I have no wish to dilate upon them, or claim any consideration in consequence of them. I merely wish to show that no light obstacle would daunt me in monsieur's service. But there are limits to all things,

and I regret to state that it would be contrary to the very organization of the nature with which I was born into this—this expensive world, if I were to attempt longer to serve a gentleman whose notions of expenditure are on a scale so different from any to which I am accustomed."

At the end of this long oration, Monsieur Morlot paused for breath; and then he proceeded to deliver up his accounts.

"Monsieur will, I think, find them correct in every particular," he remarked, with conscious pride.

Trelane was vastly amused. He could not believe that the man was in earnest.

"Why, you don't mean to say," he argued, "that you are going to give me warning because I have given away a few francs?"

"A few francs! Monsieur is casting away his inheritance right and left."

"Well, but my good fellow, it doesn't affect you."

"Pardon me, monsieur. However humble the capacity in which I officiate, I regard the interests of monsieur and my own as identical."

"And you intend to dissolve partnership unless I retrench?"

"Monsieur, there is no other alternative left to me."

"Upon my word," remarked Trelane to himself, speaking in his native tongue, "these French fellows

have queer notions as to the relations between master and man." And with that the major proceeded to cross-examine his extraordinary retainer with a view of ascertaining whether he really could be in earnest. He was, however, quite unable to shake him.

"Well, but what do you yourself propose?" the major asked at last, in a sort of desperation. "When these people do all sorts of things for you that you don't want, what is to be done?"

"Hand them over to me," replied Monsieur Morlot, oracularly.

"Hand them over to you?" and Trelane mused for awhile over the words. "I'm sorry for them," he thought to himself; "but there seems no other way of settling it. Very well," he added, aloud; "so be it, Monsieur Morlot. I *will* hand them over to you, so now let us hear no more of dissolving partnership, I beg."

"I will undertake that monsieur shall be satisfied. I will respect the purse of monsieur as I would that of my own grandfather."

And so this tremendous colloquy ended. But it would have been a bad treaty that, for all those hangers-on and amateur lacquais who live about the doors of hotels, *if it had been adhered to.* On the next day, and on many subsequent days, our Englishman could not fail to observe that all the applicants who approached Monsieur Morlot with a list of their claims on his master's bounty, came away with

gloomy and dejected countenances. So much so, indeed, that I am afraid it must be stated in this true history that our hero would not unfrequently chase the more miserable of them into secret places, and there distinctly and deliberately break through the treaty by which he had so solemnly bound himself. Nor was any mention of these almsdeeds to be extracted from him by all Monsieur Morlot's ingenuity, for the benefit of the account-books. Well, it was a pious fraud at any rate.

And so by a pleasant day's journey along the banks of the picturesque Loire Trelane got, next day, to Sancergues, a short voyage made out of consideration to Monsieur Morlot's pains and aches, which were indeed so torturing that the travellers were obliged to do the distance mainly at a walking pace. From Sancergues, another day's travelling brought them back to Bourges where they arrived, in spite of the most vigilant inquiry kept up all along the line of route, just as wise as they started. Two of the main roads leading out of Bourges had, however, been examined, and examined very carefully, and that was something achieved at any rate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEARCH CONTINUED.

After a day's rest at Bourges, in the course of which M. Legrand was applied to in vain for intelligence of the britscha, Trelane and his companion set off once again—the latter much recruited by this brief repose—to try that line of route which left the little town in a northerly direction and led to Chapelle d'Angillon and Aubigny. It will be unnecessary to follow the travellers on this excursion. The specimen already given of their first day's journey is enough. What they experienced on that occasion they experienced with small variations over and over again: the same difficulty in getting their questions answered; the same unwillingness on the part of every one to admit that the carriage had not been seen; the same tendency to make capital out of the English gentleman's anxiety for information. In this last particular, however, the inhabitants of the department of the Cher found themselves considerably baulked by the extraordinary parsimony of M. Jacques Morlot; a system

of economy so rigidly adhered to that it was by no means uncommon for this gentleman to reward some amateur partisan who had shown a more than ordinary zeal in doing what was not required of him, with a present of two, or, perhaps, on special occasions, of three sous for his trouble. From that journey, northward, the travellers returned entirely unsuccessful; having advanced their purpose in nothing, except in that one more of the roads leading away from the town had been thoroughly, though unavailingly, explored. There remained to examine the roads leading away from the town in a southerly and south-westerly direction.

It was on the highway leading due south that our Englishman and his companion next embarked. M. Morlot was now getting a little accustomed to horse-exercise, and, though still complaining, was decidedly better of his stiffness. The horses, too, were getting into better working condition. It is true that Mouton when led out of his stable in the morning always allowed himself to be dragged along with his head in a perfectly straight line with his body, and looking altogether as if each step would be his last. It is also true that the animal ridden by the major started aside at every object which afforded the slightest excuse for that proceeding, and laid its ears prefectly flat upon its neck whenever any vehicle had to be passed by, an action which, accompanied by a slight nervous

contraction of one or other of the hind legs resembling an abortive kick, is generally thought to indicate a bad temper in the equine species. The beast always manifested a strong disinclination to allow anybody to get upon his back, which was sometimes inconvenient, and it possessed, moreover, a weakness for snapping at inoffensive passers-by when allowed to stand in places of public resort. This animal was also a crib-biter, but with the exception of these qualities, and a weakness for grinding his rider's leg to powder against walls, he was quite an agreeable horse to have to do with.

At any rate he could always go, and could always eat, two very important points indeed, and as Mouton always managed somehow or other, though always at a respectful distance, to follow him, the travellers were pretty well off, at any rate in a locomotive point of view. There was another reason besides his innate laziness why it was judicious for Mouton to keep at a considerable distance from the animal, some of whose characteristics we have been examining. Trelane's horse appeared, among other amiable weaknesses, to have a rooted detestation of his companion in labour, and was always ready to salute Mouton with a snap or a kick whenever that innocent beast was imprudent enough to venture within range.

It was with something of a despondent feeling that Trelane started now, for the fourth time, on a new

expedition away from Bourges. He was beginning to be discouraged by prolonged want of success. He was beginning to disbelieve in that fragment of burnt card on the strength of whose testimony he was, after all, principally acting. It was now nearly a fortnight since he had first arrived at Bourges, and how little had been achieved in that time. New suggestions, too, came thronging into his mind as to how he might better have conducted his search. How did he know but that that carriage might have been hired by d'Elmar's orders on purpose to mislead him? How did he know but that it had been driven to some station on the railroad a little way out of the town and there placed bodily on a truck to be whisked off to any distant place that d'Elmar might have chosen to indicate to these too obedient women?

Trelane then rode along occupying himself with these and the like unpleasant thoughts, while under all there was, though he would hardly acknowledge it to himself, a sort of dim presentiment of evil, "some such gain-giving," as Hamlet says, "as might, perhaps, trouble a woman." He put it from him as an unworthy thing; but it came back, and, seeming to like its quarters, kept there.

The road lay through a country which would be called in guide-books "flat, and of little interest." But is such country of little interest? It is gloomy, monotonous, solitary, if you will, but surely of

interest, if only from its being so wild and lonely, and so intensely French.

The travellers were to ride that morning a distance of eighteen miles to a village called Levet, where they were to rest, and in the afternoon they proposed to get on to Chateauneuf. It was about half way on their first stage that Trelane and his attendant passed by a very dreary and dark-looking auberge, which stood, a little set back, by the road-side. It was shut up, and there were no signs of inhabitants about the place. At first Trelane rode past this unpromising-looking house of entertainment, thinking it useless to lose time in stopping at such a place; but he had not got a hundred yards away from the house, when it began to bother him. "When first I began this search, I should have stopped there," he said to himself; "I am evidently beginning to get discouraged," and he reined up his horse. Monsieur Morlot came trotting up, high in his stirrups, and Mouton, discreetly enough, pulled himself up just out of kicking distance.

"We have gone past that auberge," said Trelane, stating a self-evident proposition; "don't you think it would have been better to make inquiry there?"

"I should hardly think so," said Morlot, turning round to look at the inn.

Trelane hesitated a moment, but the auberge had got hold of him and was not to be dislodged.

"I wish," he said, "you would just go back and

see if you can find any one who is likely to be able to give a rational answer to a question."

Monsieur Morlot did as he was told, and Trelane watched him as he knocked and waited at the door, and then knocked and waited again. At last the door was opened by a woman, and between her and Morlot a brief colloquy took place. Then Monsieur Morlot began to gesticulate to his master, and that with—for him—some considerable show of excitement. In the shortest space of time possible, Trelane was at his side.

"Monsieur, this good woman says that a carriage such as you are in search of, has not only been seen, but has actually stopped here."

Trelane felt his pulse quicken.

"Was it possible? Was he on the track at last?"

The woman gave her evidence without doubtfulness or equivocation. Asked to describe the carriage, she spoke of it as an open vehicle with a leather covering, besides the hood. She volunteered the information that there were in it two ladies and a servant, and that the carriage was drawn by two horses, a white and a brown. One of the horses was the cause of their stopping at the auberge; it had cast a shoe, and the blacksmith had to be fetched to set this mishap right. This altogether took some time, and the ladies came in; yes, and partook of refreshments. They were at the auberge about three or four hours altogether. They were very

kind ladies, and spoke French perfectly; but they were not of the French nation. Oh, no! there was no doubt about that.

"We are on the track, Morlot," said Trelane, turning to his follower.

"Oui, monsieur," was that gentleman's reply, and with a man of that unsanguine nature, it meant a great deal.

Trelane dismounted and went for a moment into the house with the ostensible motive of getting a draught of wine. When he reappeared he got on horseback again without delay, and, bidding Monsieur Morlot follow him swiftly lest he should observe how grateful the auberge woman was for what he had given her, he rode hastily away. Hope and purpose now were both strong within him.

Yes; they were on the track at last. At the blacksmith's shop, where a mile or two farther on they stopped to seek for corroboration of the story told by the woman at the auberge, her account was confirmed word for word; confirmed still farther on by a cantonnier, who, stationed at a place where two roads met, remembered perfectly an occurrence so rare as the appearance of a carriage on that deserted road, and was able to inform them which way it had gone; confirmed when they reached Levet, where they were to remain some hours, and where it appeared that these ladies, in consequence no doubt of the delay occasioned in the early part of the day

by the loss of the horse's shoe, had paused only for a very short time, and then had gone on their way. It was nearly a fortnight ago, the landlord said; but he remembered the circumstance perfectly. Travellers, and especially ladies, were not so common upon the road that he was likely to forget.

Trelane left the horses under the care of Monsieur Morlot, and, resisting the entreaties of the maître d'hôtel that he would enter and repose himself after his journey, he turned his back upon the village, and walked out alone into the country beyond. He required to be in solitude to deal with the thoughts which this new discovery had stirred up within him; while as to rest, the thing was out of the question with that road before him, along which those of whom he was in such close pursuit had so recently travelled. For our major had instinctively chosen the road by which he had been told that the carriage had left Levet, and was hurrying along it almost as if he expected, on foot as he was, to overtake a carriage with a fortnight's start of him. Trelane was a humane man, but I am much afraid that he grudged very much the three hours' rest which the horses required to fit them for what they had still to do in the course of the day.

It was half-past three o'clock in the afternoon when Trelane and his companion started once more on their now hopeful journey. The rain was falling, and it was a dull heavy day, but Trelane found keen

enjoyment in that afternoon's ride notwithstanding. The rows of poplars, the pond by the road-side, the common objects that meet the eye on a French road, the mist which hid the distant prospect, with much such a veil as that which concealed the issue of this very journey, all gave pleasure to our Englishman, all seemed that day to be invested with a curious interest and delight of their own.

At last the travellers came to a place where the road divided into two, branching off respectively to the right and left. A finger-post announced that one of them, that namely which bore away to the right, led to a place called Chateauneuf, but other information there was none. There were no houses near, nor any person of whom anything could be learned that might help our travellers to decide which route they ought to adopt. It was necessary, however, to come to some conclusion or other, so Trelane chose the road to the right. He felt, of course, instantly a strong internal conviction that he had made a wrong choice, but he and his companion rode on nevertheless. They made inquiry after the carriage at several houses which they passed, but could get no tidings at all; so that it was with a tolerably strong impression that they had wandered away from the right track that, towards dusk, they entered the village of Chateauneuf, and inquired for the principal inn. A dismal frowning home of entertainment that principal inn was,

with a morose and gloomy proprietor, who was assisted by a staff of servants—groom, waiting-maid, and femme de chambre, all as morose and gloomy as the patron himself. This latter gentleman did nothing but play at billiards, and groan with dyspepsia. He was engaged in both these ways when our travellers arrived, and did not at all discompose himself to attend to their wants or answer their questions. A pale, sallow-looking individual this, who, when he groaned with dyspepsia, certainly did not—to judge by appearances—cry out without reason.

Already suspecting, as has been said, that he had chosen the wrong road, Trelane was confirmed in this impression by the hesitating and evasive replies which he got from the maître d'hôtel in answer to his inquiries. Hitherto, every one had been so anxious to prove that he was full of information, even though really possessing none, that our Englishman could not believe that he had now met with a person who really knew something, and yet withheld it; and, consequently, he ceased to ply his surly host with questions earlier than would have been the case under ordinary circumstances. He came to the conclusion, however, that there was nothing for it but to wait till the next day, and then get back to the point of junction of the two roads. To do anything that night was impossible. The horses, on whose strength and endurance every-

thing depended, were tired out, and must of necessity rest till the morrow.

Monsieur Morlot showed himself at this particular time a more sanguine person than his master. Perhaps he knew his own countrymen better than did the major. Certainly he was a better judge of the meaning of tones and gesticulations when used as adjuncts to the French language. At all events, he fancied that the landlord knew more than he let out, and he stuck to him accordingly.

"You seem to be suffering!" he remarked, as the patron, in an interval of billiard-playing, gave vent to a deep groan, and, turning up the whites of his eyes, smote his chest with his clenched hand. Trelane was upstairs in his room, and there was no one present except the other billiard-player, who was occupying himself in making fancy canons with that extraordinary amount of success which generally attends us when it can be of no possible use.

"Suffering?" echoed the patron, "when am I anything else? With a hyæna gnawing at the pit of my stomach, with a perpetual feeling of sickness, with eyes that are roasted, and a tongue like a nutmeg-grater, how should I do otherwise than suffer?"

"I think I could relieve some of those sufferings for you," said Monsieur Morlot, "with the aid of some medicines I have by me."

"Sapristi!" groaned the patron, "I wish you could."

Monsieur Morlot had formed an opinion that the worthy proprietor of all these aches and pains had been all this time withholding a certain amount of information of which he was possessed with the hope of receiving a bribe. Always morbidly anxious to save his master's purse, he now determined that the bribe administered should be drawn from the materia medica—a medicinal rather than a pecuniary bribe.

"'Nothing for nothing,'" remarked Morlot, in answer to the patron's last remark; "if I undertake to relieve your dyspepsia you must answer my questions a little more satisfactorily than you did those of my master just now."

"But suppose I have no information as to the matter about which you question me?"

"Yes, and suppose you have a good deal?"

"Suppose you undertake to cure me, and don't?"

"If I fail in my part of the contract, Monsieur le Patron, of course you are at liberty to abandon your share in it."

"No cure, no pay, hein?"

"Precisely so, Monsieur le Patron."

"Very well, then," replied the patron, with a fresh groan, extorted, doubtless, by the ravages of the hyæna. "If you relieve me of this anguish of mine, I undertake to examine my business books, and to ransack my memory for matter with which to satisfy your curiosity."

"Good!" answered the amateur doctor, and he

retired to compose a potion which should meet the exigencies of the case.

"Menthe frisée, alkali volatile, infusion de rhubarbe, essence de gingembre, infusion d'oranges," muttered Monsieur Morlot to himself, as he proceeded with his work; "behold a composition which *ought* to dispose of the patron's hyæna at a single gulp. Hold," he added, "I will introduce a little magnesia to make sure of it."

The patron made hideous faces over that mixture, which presented rather an unappetizing appearance, it must be owned, and emitted odours of rhubarb and peppermint, which quite seemed to fill the house. It was, moreover, made up with boiling water, and was furiously hot. When at length the patron had mustered courage to swallow it, it brought the tears into his eyes.

Monsieur Morlot went to his master's room to go through his accounts, and he took the opportunity of mentioning what he had done, and how it seemed probable that the medicine-chest would, after all, be of service in furthering the object in pursuit of which the travellers had come to Chateauneuf.

When the amateur physician returned, after the lapse of half an hour or so, to his patient, he found him evidently much better, though hardly disposed to acknowledge that he was so. The fact is, that he was a grasping wretch, this dyspeptic landlord, and now that he felt a little, or rather a good deal,

better, he began to think again of the money he might extort. Then he was very anxious to learn of what this precious draught was composed, in order that he might have it by him in case of future torments.

"Come," said Monsieur Morlot, "you are trying to evade your part of the contract, but it won't do. I can judge of a man's inside by his external appearance, and I can see that you are better."

"No," retorted the other with a grimace of pain, "not a bit."

"Then, there," replied the amateur, "I suppose, is an end of the affair."

But the patron was of a different opinion.

"Although not materially better," he said, "I feel so far a sort of dim sensation of a prospective relief, which induces me to think that it might be as well if I had the prescription by me from which the dose was compounded."

The patron was beaten, and Morlot from this time had it all his own way. He would give the prescription which, as he satirically observed, the patron seemed singularly desirous of obtaining, considering that it had done him no good; but before that magic recipe was forthcoming, he must have the information of which he was in search. Of course there was all manner of equivocation as to the very existence of this information, but it ended in the patron's disappearing for a time to consult his books and

his chambermaid, and when he reappeared, and found Monsieur Morlot sitting with a folded paper in his hands, containing the list of drugs and the proportions in which they were mingled, he was able to hold out no longer, and admitted that on reconsideration, and after putting his servants through a severe cross-examination, he found that a carriage, such as that which the travellers were in search of, had stopped there about a fortnight since, that the two ladies and their bonne had passed the night at the inn, and had then returned to that point of junction where the road to Chateauneuf branched off from that which led to St. Amand, with the intention of pursuing the route which would conduct them straight to the last-named place. This was all he knew, except, by-the-by, that the younger lady had left this pair of slippers, which, as monsieur seemed to be acquainted with these ladies, he would perhaps take charge of and return to her.

Monsieur Morlot handed over the prescription to the dyspeptic one, and repaired triumphantly with the news and the slippers to his master.

Trelane had seen those slippers upon Madeleine's feet before now. They were a little pair of red morocco shoes very well worn, and the Englishman wrapped them very tenderly in a clean white handkerchief and laid them carefully in the most comfortable place which the narrow accommodation of his saddle-bags was capable of affording. After that, it

being now somewhat late, he lay down to rest, but he longed too eagerly for the morrow to be able to get much sleep.

Next morning the dyspeptic one was found in a high state of exultation. Having parted with his hoarded up intelligence he had now no further motive for concealing his restoration to health. He had not passed such a night for years, he said, and as Trelane and his attendant rode away from the inn door, the latter could not resist calling his master's attention once more to the important part which on this occasion had been played by the medicine chest.

All along the line of route that day the travellers were met with "confirmation strong," that they were now, indeed, upon the right track. At way-side houses, at the village where they stopped for the necessary midday rest, the same account met them of the carriage with two horses, one white and the other brown, and of the two ladies and the servant who occupied it. And when at last, late at night, they rode into the inn-yard at St. Amand, they were met with the intelligence that the English ladies of whom they were in search had actually passed a night in the hotel, and were now, at that present speaking, living hard by in lodgings which they had taken in the town.

As Trelane listened to these words the thing seemed to him impossible.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOURNEY'S ISSUE.

TRELANE spent that day at St. Amand without much advancing in the object which had brought him to this strange, out-of-the-way place. M. Morlot had, indeed, succeeded in gaining a certain amount of information of some importance. He had discovered that Madame d'Elmar and her niece were really staying, and had been staying for nearly a fortnight, in this little town. He knew where they were lodging, and he had even seen, without being himself observed, the bonne, Victorine, making purchases in the market. There was nothing then to prevent our major from walking straight up to the door of the house occupied by these ladies and asking to see them. From this, however, Trelane shrank. He wanted to see Madeleine, and to see her alone, and he knew that, if once his presence in the town became known, she would be kept in rigid restraint, and a private interview with her would be an impossible thing. The seclusion in which Miss

d'Elmar had been held during the latter days of Trelane's stay in the Rue Pompadour was enough to convince him that he could not be too careful in keeping himself now from observation.

For that one day Trelane resolved to trust to some chance bringing about the meeting for which he longed. If no such thing happened he would write the next day and demand an interview with Madame d'Elmar, in which he would ask for some explanation of all that now puzzled and distressed him so much. This was, however, but a *pis aller*, and he much wished that he might be able to see Miss d'Elmar alone before it became necessary for him to have an interview with her aunt.

Trelane trusted to a chance, and chance helped him. There are at St. Amand still some remains of the ancient castle once occupied by the *Princes de* Condé. It was towards the close of the day that Trelane, who had been wandering about the little town, came upon these and paused for awhile to examine them. The warm February day was near its early termination; the sun was going down behind a bank of clouds that had an angry look, and there was something close and oppressive in the feeling of the air. Trelane sat down upon a piece of stone close to a great mass of masonry which, though it hid some part of the view, was in itself of some interest as having formed a portion of that relic of an age which *change*, even

more than time, had rendered distant. Time and change, those agents of resistless power! Here were those walls on which once the safety of men and women had depended broken up now into small fragments that might be looked upon as mere rough garden ornaments, like a piece of trellis-work or a vase. What scenes had taken place within those walls—scenes belonging to a state of manners how different from those of even this primitive and retired community of St. Amand. Within those walls the "great Condé" had been brought up. He was a sickly child; perhaps, he had sat at that loop-hole window for many an hour looking out into the small, small patch of world that lay without it, while his mind became matured for its future work, matured by processes which we in our ignorance might think more likely to arrest strength than develop it, to blunt the faculties rather than to quicken them. What was this neat little town of St. Amand like in those days?

Time and change still; how wonderful that, influenced by these great agencies, he, Henry Trelane, should be sitting in that queer corner of the world in such silence and solitude! He whose life hitherto had been passed for the most part in scenes so different; he with troops of friends—friends of the Eton days, friends of his early military life, friends found out to be good or bad in passing through the test of camp-life, friends in the jungle, friends in Pall

Mall—these last wondering "what had become of Trelane, who left for a week or two at Paris or Vichy, and who had been away now for months." Yes, there he was; he who was being, at that moment, talked of by fond sisters and a loving mother over the home dinner-table, and whose movements men were canvassing at the club, there he was sitting on a stone in the very middle of France, in a very small and sequestered town, of whose existence even he himself had never thought till lately. And most wonderful of all, he was there by his own wish and consent, and had no desire at that moment to be anywhere else. Trelane loved his family, and he loved his friends, but something stronger than either friend or family held him bound to that little quiet French town of St. Amand.

Lost in these and similar reflections, Trelane had sat among those fragments of ruin till the sun had quite gone, and the chill of the early spring twilight was beginning to make itself felt. Trelane rose with a slight shudder to leave the place.

He rose to leave the place, and turning round by the corner of that mass of masonry which has been already mentioned, he found himself in one moment face to face with Madeleine d'Elmar.

Yes, that creature, dealt with so long by his fancy, thought of so much, seen so little, that he had almost in the reverie which held him a moment since begun to doubt whether she did really exist, or was

a being of the imagination, or of a dream—she was there—mind and body—that one small sentient atom on the earth's great surface for which he had been so earnestly seeking—she was there in the indistinct twilight before him.

And now he knew how well he loved her, and he felt in his inmost heart that he could follow her to a more distant region than that little sequestered spot of France which had seemed, but now, itself remote from civilization.

When Madeleine d'Elmar first saw Trelane, surprise and joy brought a cry, which, light as it was, was intelligible enough, to her lips. Her wonder, it must be remembered, was greater than Trelane's, for, while he knew that she was at St. Amand, his presence there was unknown to Madeleine, so that in the half-darkness she almost seemed to see an apparition before her—but an apparition of what joy and happiness—for one moment.

In that one moment this simple girl saw before her the man whom she loved with all the strength of her heart, in the next she saw only one from whom she was separated for ever. Of the agony which that second thought brought with it, of the leaden weight which in one instant crushed down her first transport of joy, it is miserable even to think. True to that second thought, Madeleine shrank back from the Englishman's advance, and even turned as if to leave the place.

"Miss d'Elmar," said Trelane, and his voice seemed to root her to the spot, "Madeleine, what have I done, that you shrink even from speaking to me as you would to a common acquaintance?"

Madeleine was silent. The tears were in her throat, she *could* not speak. Trelane spoke again.

"Why do you not answer me? You are doing me a wrong in this."

She tried to speak.

"You have done nothing," she said, in a low broken voice,—"nothing but what is right."

"Then why do you avoid me as you have done? Why am I kept from seeing you? Madeleine, dear, gentle girl, I love you. I have sought after you ever since I was well enough to move. Madeleine, you cannot leave me now," and Trelane took her cold hand in his, and drew her gently to him.

She resisted him no longer, nor sought any more to leave the place. To hear him speak so to her, to be near him thus, was joy so unutterable, that it held her almost as if she were in a trance. She let that trance descend upon her. She banished all thought that was not of the present. She would be with him for a time, she would listen to his voice. She would have some few minutes at least of life. Then she would see him no more; that would be death—an anticipation of death. She would wait till it came to release her.

"Madeleine," said the Englishman, and she trem-

bled as she heard him speak her name, "Madeleine, in the few months that I have known you, everything seems altered in my life. Everything that has happened, every hour that has passed, has drawn me more and more towards you. All the strange events which have brought us at last to be here together to-day, have each of them bound me to you more, and made me—made me love you, Madeleine,—there is only that one word for it all. And you—were you not glad just now to see me?"

There was no answer, no change in their position, but Trelane felt the tears dropping fast on one of his hands—great heavy hot tears like the first drops of a thunderstorm. Presently she spoke, and Trelane listened with an ineffable but tranquil joy to the words which came from her lips.

"I love you."

There was a long, long pause—one of the great, eventful, eloquent pauses of life. Time passed, the world went on, there were busy scenes in other places. The politics of the nation were being settled by some; some were in the light and glitter of "society." Deeds were doing of vice and sin, of violence and crime. There was noise and confusion even now in the great cities, and here in this little unfrequented town all sorts of small people were occupied with small interests and cares, and paltry pleasures of the café or the domino-table.

Only for these two the world stood still for a

moment, or rather they seemed to have stepped aside for a time and let it roll on without them. The twilight was now deepening, and the evening air was chill and wintry; but neither Trelane nor his companion thought of these things."

The long silence was broken at last, very softly, and Trelane's words seemed in harmony with the quiet of everything around.

"Always together from this time," he said. "We have been apart long enough. Your place is here, by me, and mine is by you henceforth. Always together——"

He was interrupted by a cry from Madeleine; a cry so horrible that he thought she had gone suddenly mad.

"Always together!" she cried, as she burst away from him; "always asunder you mean. Leave me," she continued, after a moment's pause, during which her voice seemed to have gone from her. "Leave me, you good man—leave me—it is over."

"Over!" echoed Trelane; "what is over? what do you mean?" and he tried to approach her once more, but she drew back away from him now. "Madeleine, what is this—this madness?"

"Madness! No! The other was madness. Madness to speak to you; madness to be near you. Yet it was only for a moment, and I have waited so long." And she flung herself against the wall and beat her hands against the rough masonry.

"Madeleine, Madeleine," cried her lover, and he tried to seize her hands, but she would not let him touch her.

"Never again! oh, never again," she moaned. "Leave me. Be merciful, and leave me."

"I will not leave you," said Trelane, trying now to soothe her, for he thought that this was really some access of a hysterical kind which might yet pass from her. "I will not leave you while you are in this state. Madeleine," he continued, "you are suffering, you have been troubled, in agitation, and you are not yourself."

"Yes, yes, yes," she moaned; "I am myself. I know what I say, and I tell you it must not be. We must part—part now—part for ever."

"Madeleine, you said you loved me."

"And so I do, and so I do," she cried, the sobs breaking and impeding her utterance. "I do love you—Henry."

"Madeleine, my darling!"

"I do love you—love you with all my soul; but still I say—we must part!"

"Madeleine, is this what you say—to me?"

"I say—God bless you, you good man; for ever bless you—no more." She turned to go; but Trelane held her by the wrist and stood in her way.

"These are words, mere words that you give me. I ask for an answer. A plain answer to a plain question. *Why* must we part?"

How could she tell him? Oh, had there been some one by to speak the words which shame arrested on her tongue! Had he but known—known in that hour, when mistrust was beginning to creep like some icy reptile into his breast—what a small reason that was which kept them apart, how much of suffering and agony might have been saved to two human souls! Oh, would that he had known, for he would have taken that poor broken heart to his own and hushed it to quietness upon his breast! But she could not speak; she could only sob and moan, and call upon him in mercy to leave her.

And now, indeed, doubt and mistrust were gaining a hold upon Trelane's mind. After all, what did he know of these people? Nay, what he *did* know, was it not calculated to produce doubt and suspicion? They were living away from home, with no friends about them; nothing, apparently, to connect them with their own country, and in a total seclusion; they seemed, in fact, to be hiding; but from what, or from whom? and the one person whom they did see, and with whom they did associate—Alexis d'Elmar? Was it good that he should have such influence over all their movements? to what was that influence tending? And then that friend of his who seemed so ready to co-operate with him in all his plans; what share might not he have in this mystery?

Trelane released the hand which he had been holding.

"You are deceiving me," he said. "There is, by your own acknowledgment, some obstacle, some reason, that should keep us asunder, and which you speak of in mysterious terms. What is that reason? Tell me, or I will take you at your word and leave the place without a moment's delay."

Trelane paused for an answer, but waited in vain.

"There is but one way," he continued, presently, "of accounting for this silence. Why should you not own it? There is some one else to whom you have pledged yourself." Madeleine looked up eagerly for one moment, and then raised her hand as if in deprecation. "And then you talk to me of love. I tell you, you try me too far. You force me to a conclusion from which I would, oh, how gladly, shrink. You force me to believe that there is some one whom you favour secretly; some one already bound to you by ties of relationship, but who seeks to hold you by bonds that shall be stronger yet; or, perhaps, some friend of his, his creature, his tool—some Monsieur Tronchet."

"Tronchet? certainly, monsieur, at your service."

Horrible confirmation of Trelane's suspicions. As the tones of that voice struck upon his ear, he turned swiftly round, and there confronting him in the half-darkness with that same evil smile upon his countenance, and standing with his military cap in his

hand in an attidude of mock politeness, was Lieutenant Tronchet!

When that third person joined the group, Madeleine had uttered a cry of such utter and bewildered astonishment as must have convinced any one not under the influence of such strong and certainly excusable suspicion as that which possessed Trelane, of the unfounded and painful surprise with which she regarded the arrival of this man. But to Trelane this was only another piece of acting, and the better it was done the worse his opinion of the performer. He had now no doubt whatever of the relation in which these two stood to each other, no doubt that this man had always been a secret lover of Madeleine's —no doubt, in fine, that he had been deceived, and duped, and fooled by d'Elmar, by this grinning ape, and, worst of all, by Madeleine herself. It was a sore trial, and Trelane, believing himself to have been so ill dealt with, was justly angry. The tone taken by Lieutenant Tronchet in addressing Miss d'Elmar was not calculated to allay our Englishman's suspicions.

"Why, what a race you have given me!" he said, familiarly. "I have been all over this magnificent and brilliant town in search of you, and have only just found you out through the assistance of the Suisse at the church, who said he had seen you pass by, in the direction of the ruins. But what is the meaning of this? You are in tears—sobbing;

what has happened? has monsieur been insulting you?"

"Yes," Trelane broke in, impetuously, "I *have*. I have been offering her the hand of an honest man, the devotion of a life, the homage of a heart that believed against belief and hoped against hope. I have offered to care for her, to cherish and protect her, and to make for her a home that should be pure, and safe, and happy; this is how I have insulted her. And now, sir, I have done with such insults. I leave her—leave her under the protection which she, doubtless, prefers—leave her to you; and I hope," he added in English, "I hope, in heaven's mercy, that she may never live to repent in dust and ashes the choice that she has made," and as he spoke Trelane brushed roughly past the Frenchman, and, putting aside the hand of her who sought to detain him, descended the path which led to the town with rapid steps.

But, as he went, he heard in the darkness a voice that he loved still, crying after him, in piteous accents,—

"Henry, it is not true—hear me—my love—my Henry!"

CHAPTER VI.

A VERY SHORT CHAPTER.

TRELANE returned hurriedly to the little inn, bent upon leaving the town of St. Amand without a single moment's needless delay. He found Monsieur Morlot sitting with his spectacles on and lighted by a single candle, holding a great solitary audit of these eternal accounts.

"Does it happen that monsieur remembers by chance how much was expended the day before yesterday at our mid-day resting place? By some extraordinary chance I have omitted to register it."

"You must put up those things at once," was Trelane's answer. "I have ordered the horses and the bill. We leave this place directly."

Monsieur Morlot removed his spectacles, that he might stare at his master with the more perfect freedom.

"Monsieur—directly? Leave this place directly?"

"Yes, now—in five minutes."

"But, monsieur, it is night-time. Monsieur forgets that it is dark."

"I forget nothing. All you have to do is to get ready." And the Englishman seized some of the things that were lying about the room and crammed them hastily into the saddle-bags.

Monsieur Morlot saw that his master was in no humour to be trifled with, and he too commenced, though with more deliberation, his preparations for an immediate departure. Still as he proceeded with them he could not abstain from muttering a sort of wavering protest, not indeed addressed to his master, but undoubtedly intended for his ear.

"Mon Dieu! What a proceeding—where is account book No. 4?—in the dead of night—a deserted road—the stockings in which the opium was wrapped—diable! I have them on; c'est egal—here is a flannel waistcoat—to leave such comfortable quarters, for compared with some they *are* comfortable—and the account not properly balanced—to spend the night in wandering about the country—and such a country—and on horse-back. Peste! c'est horrible. There is no room for the alkali-volatile—what desperate characters may be abroad—we may be robbed—the horses may tumble in the obscurity—what may not happen? O, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!"

But of this protest Trelane—if he heard it, which is very doubtful—took no notice. How could he remain another hour in that town? How could he lie down there to rest? It was impossible. Away—that

was his only thought; let him get away, anywhere, it mattered not—but away!

Morlot continued his mutterings. "The fact is that I am afraid monsieur is suffering—suffering from a return of his late illness. If monsieur would take a slight febrifuge which I could prepare for him with the remedies I have at hand"—(here Monsieur Morlot paused, but there was no response) "monsieur is suffering from—from—the result of over-fatigue—ah! if I had but my leeches. A couple of leeches on each temple, now, would work wonders; it might be possible to get some in the town; at the chemist's, where I but now replenished my bottle of spirits of wine, I observed a jar."

"Ah, monsieur," said the unfortunate Morlot, at last, directly addressing his master, but speaking in his most soothing tones, and deprecatingly pressing his hands together, "might it be permitted to say one word, but one little, little word?"

"Well, what is it?" asked his master, who had not, as has been said, been listening to Monsieur Morlot's muttered soliloquy.

"I am convinced from previous experience that monsieur is suffering from a slight access of fever, and that to encounter the night air would be the most dangerous proceeding possible. Ah! if monsieur would but allow me to prepare him a composing draught and would repose himself just this one night, to-morrow——"

But before poor Monsieur Jacques had finished his sentence, Trelane was out of the room, and in another moment was in the inn-yard, where by this time the horses, ready bridled and saddled, were looking about them, with great apparent astonishment, at the lanterns and the by-standers, who were gathered in considerable numbers to see the travellers depart.

"Monsieur," said the man of physic, appearing at length bending under the load of the saddle-bags, "is it permitted to ask in what direction we are going to ride?"

"Back, back, as fast as we can go," was the Englishman's answer, "as far on the road to Bourges as these horses can carry us."

"Diable," whispered the unhappy Monsieur Morlot, looking round on the assembly for sympathy —"and I who was only just beginning to recover of my stiffness."

Trelane was already in the saddle, and waiting impatiently till his injured attendant had succeeded in climbing to his place on horseback, which was always an operation in the accomplishment of which much time was consumed. At length, however, even this last delay was at an end, and in another moment, Trelane, acknowledging hastily the salutations of the assembled company, and followed by Monsieur Morlot, grumbling to the last, rode swiftly out of the inn-yard.

Major Trelane rode swiftly out of the inn-yard, and in a very few minutes was clear of the little town of St. Amand. The dark clouds had gathered heavily at sunset, and it was a wild and gloomy night. The obscurity was such that it was impossible to travel at any pace, and it was owing to this circumstance that Monsieur Morlot was able at all to keep up with his master, who would doubtless, in his present frame of mind, have urged his horse to its utmost speed, had it been possible to do so. As it was, a slow trot was the only pace to be thought of, for of the road in front of the travellers but a few yards could be seen, dimly separated by its whiteness from the surrounding objects, which themselves seemed to gain size in the darkness, and assumed, as everything will under such circumstances, the wildest and most fantastic shapes.

Trelane and his attendant rode along in total silence, Monsieur Morlot occupying himself with speculations as to what could possibly have occurred to produce this sudden, and to him most unwelcome, retreat from St. Amand, and Trelane still in that state which succeeds the first shock of any great trouble, when the mind contents itself with simply dwelling on what has happened; repeating, as it were, the bad news over and over to itself, neither seeking for consolation for the past, nor organizing any course of action for the future. As they thus rode, Trelane's attention was caught

by a sudden exclamation coming from his follower.

"Hark!" he called out, for he was riding a little way behind his master, "what was that?"

Trelane pulled up his horse as Morlot had done already.

"I thought I heard some one calling," said the Frenchman.

They both sat still and listened. The darkness seemed to add increased stillness to the silence of the night. For some time there was no sound audible but the breathing of the horses and the occasional rattling of their bits. By-and-by, Trelane heard, very faintly, the sound of a human voice. The cry, however, was rather a shout designed to attract attention than the outcry of one in distress or terror. From time to time the shout was repeated, gaining always in strength, and at last another sound became just audible in the distance—a faint sound of wheels. The horses put up their ears and seemed to listen too. Monsieur Morlot, hopeful that these cries might, in some way or other, be connected with some incident that might arrest this terrible night-journey, at this juncture lifted up his voice, and replied to the shouts with a good lusty bellow.

And now looking back along the road by which they had travelled, Trelane was able to see, dancing and jolting along, as if it were an appurtenance of some rough-going vehicle, a light as of a single coach-

lamp or stable lanthorn. Presently, too, the jingle of a peal of horse-bells was added as an accompaniment to the sound of the wheels and the clattering of hoofs, and then the travellers had not long to wait, before a common two-wheeled cart of the country became discernible, growing suddenly out of the darkness, and at the same time the sound of a voice, which Trelane thought he had somewhere heard before, struck upon his ear.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" said the person—a woman—to whom the voice belonged. "What a mercy that we have caught them up."

There were two people in the cart, the woman who had just delivered herself of the words, and a man who was driving.

"Peste," said the latter, "it *is* lucky, for I should not have gone on much further such a night as this." As he spoke, the driver of the cart was engaged in helping his companion to descend from the vehicle. When this last reached the ground, the glare of the lanthorn was full upon her, and then Trelane saw in the woman whose voice he had already recognized, the servant of Madame d'Elmar—Victorine.

At sight of her, Trelane almost mechanically put his horse into motion; but the girl was too quick for him; she ran eagerly forward and stood by his bridle-rein.

"Monsieur," she cried, "you cannot; you cannot

be so cruel. You are good, and gentle, and kind, you must hear me."

The Englishman did not shake her off, but he made no reply, and there were no signs of relenting in his face.

They had got a little way in advance of the cart and of Monsieur Morlot, and were out of ear-shot; but Victorine spoke in a voice little above a whisper.

"Sir," she said, and she spoke through tears, "mademoiselle—my poor young mistresss—he bade me give you this. It was her last request of you that you would read it."

It was a letter, and as she spoke Victorine tried to put it into the Englishman's hand.

"Ah, monsieur, if you could see her—her misery; for weeks and weeks I have not seen her smile, but now—now it is like despair."

Trelane took the letter.

"More deceit, I suppose," he muttered to himself. "There," he said, addressing the girl, "you can tell your mistress that I have taken it."

"But, monsieur, I was not to leave you till you had read it. Ah, monsieur," cried the poor girl, "do not harden yourself so terribly; it is not like you. Monsieur, I have followed you to the inn, and came only just too late; but I could not bear to go back with no tidings for that young lady, so I found out which way you had gone, and got Jacques Aimard here to drive me, and now when

I have found you at last, you surely will show this little mercy, and let me go back to mademoiselle with at least the news that you have read her letter."

With that she called out to Jacques to bring the lanthorn with all speed, and then bidding him retire once more out of hearing, she took the lamp from his hands, and holding it so that it shed its light upon the papers, waited while Trelane, with an agitation which he could not altogether control, broke the seal and opened the letter.

"I consent to do this, mind," he said; "but I tell you beforehand that it will make no alteration in my actions."

Victorine made no reply to this, and the Englishman turned to the letter. It was written evidently in great haste. It was almost illegible, and blistered with the tears that had fallen on it.

"For the sake of all that you have done for me," it began, "in memory of what your goodness once made you do for me, be merciful once—only once—again. I am not writing to ask you to come back. That cannot be. Go from me as you say you will, but not with those thoughts—not thinking that I am so bad as to deceive you. You cannot think that that man was in my thoughts when I spoke to you, and said we must part. If you went away believing that, I think I should die. I will tell you this because that belief *must* go out of your

heart, or how can I live? Till that moment when you saw him, I had not seen or spoken to him for many months, nor knew he was in the place, or coming there. Months ago I was troubled by him, and my uncle persecuted me to listen to him, though I never would. Since then he has been away—in Africa, I think—nor have I heard anything of him except through my uncle, who always would speak of him, till yesterday evening, when he appeared, to add one drop more to my unhappiness, and to bring a cruel and groundless suspicion into your good heart.

"There, I have said all that I need say. I do not ask you to come back. I have said this before, but I hardly know what I am writing. I only ask you, and entreat you most humbly, to believe this truth, that it is not because of this man, or of any other in this world, that we must part now and always.

"MADELEINE."

After reading that sad letter, Trelane did for one instant flinch in the steadiness of his purpose. The misery of its writer came before him so vividly, and the love he bore to her pleaded her cause so strongly in his heart. For one moment he relented in thought, and Victorine, who was watching his face with eager anxiety, thought she saw hope in it, and hoped accordingly. But, alas! that relenting

was but of short duration. Back came the remembrance of that vile leer on the countenance of the French officer, that look of triumph and of conscious power. Back came the cruel doubts as to what that thing—so carefully concealed—could be; what it was that was being concealed from him. Back came the suspicion that he was being MADE A FOOL OF, and the Englishman gave way before these cruel thoughts, for which it must be owned that there appeared to be much rational ground, and he hardened his heart once more.

Trelane folded that letter again and put it away.

"There," he said, as he prepared to ride away, "I have fulfilled your request. Are you satisfied?"

"But, monsieur," pleaded the girl, "is there no answer—not a single word."

"None—stay," said Trelane, interrupting himself, "I have read the letter, let that be the answer." He would hear no more, and without another word rode away into the darkness.

He seemed to ride now with entire recklessness, and as those whom he left behind listened, they could detect that his pace seemed constantly to increase as he advanced, the strokes of his horse's hoofs succeeding each other with still less and less of interval between them. The man who had driven Victorine in his cart, the bonne herself, and Monsieur Morlot looked at each other with

faces whose blankness was but dimly revealed by the light of the lanthorn.

"Peste," said Jacques Aimard, "this must be a man with some extra lives in his pocket-book. He will soon be rid of this present one."

"To ride away from all that is good for him at that rate," was the remark of Victorine.

"And I, who have got to follow him," sighed the unhappy Morlot.

From this course it was vain to dissuade our amateur doctor. Indeed it was only Monsieur Aimard who sought to do so. Victorine remembered that she would certainly follow her own mistress wherever she went, and she could not counsel Morlot to do otherwise by his master. Besides, the worthy man thought it highly probable that some of his medicaments might be wanted for the treatment of the Englishman's injuries, in the event of an accident.

"Well, then, at any rate, you shall have my lanthorn," said Aimard; "you can leave it for me at Levet, where I shall be in a day or two."

Morlot accepted this offer, and after receiving the best wishes of his two friends, rode off, with the lanthorn resting on the pommel of his saddle, after his master. The others waited as long as their voices could cheer him, and then made the best of their way back to St. Amand.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. LEBŒUF'S VISITORS.

When the curtain fell at the end of the last chapter, the opportunity was taken to shift all the scenery, and we now find ourselves in a room of tolerably large dimensions, strangely and somewhat incongruously furnished. Except where the walls are pierced with doors or windows, they are concealed to a height of some seven or eight feet by book-shelves, which are well-filled with volumes, many of them of considerable antiquity, but some of an appearance which indicates with certainty that they are of a more recent date. They have all the air rather of books of reference, or works which require study, than of publications belonging to the department of light literature. The book-shelves are not, however, entirely devoted to the purpose to fill which they were originally constructed. Objects of all sorts, bottles, jars, wooden-boxes, even parcels tied up in paper, are to be found in company with the books. Nor are these last arranged with any sort of order. They are stuck in anyhow, as the

saying goes — upside-down, side-ways, end-ways. They are propped one against another, and one over another, and all sorts of dusty documents and loose papers are dispersed among them. These loose papers are everywhere. The book-shelves, the great bureau or escritoire which stands before the fire, another table near the windows, the chairs, all of which are of different pattern, and in different stages of decrepitude, all are covered with them, and it is evident that even a pair of globes, which stand in a corner, have had papers placed upon them; but the documents, owing to the round and slippery nature of the globes, have slipped off them, and lie upon the floor close by. There is room upon the walls for a few old engravings, such as one from the great dissection picture of Rembrandt, and the raising of Lazarus by Leevens.

At the further end of this apartment, a little door opened into another and smaller room, which appeared to be dedicated to the purposes of a laboratory, being full of all sorts of mysterious mechanical apparatus, retorts, crucibles, earthen jars, bottles, funnels, stoves, and the like matters. Some of them had also found their way into the larger room, and were scattered on the great bureau or desk, in company with many pamphlets, a small pair of scales, a case or two of surgical instruments, arranged in decent order, a stethoscope, and a very handsome inkstand, evidently a piece of what is called presentation plate. Two

chairs were placed near to the bureau, one an ordinary French chair, with a velvet cushion; the other, and this was placed with its back to the light, a large fauteuil covered with morocco leather.

This last capacious seat was occupied by our old friend and medical adviser, Doctor Lebœuf.

The doctor appears to be in much the same condition as to health as when we last saw him. His external appearance is, however, just now but dimly discernible, for there is light only at one end of the large room; and, as you enter the apartment, your eyes are dazzled by that window, and you can make nothing of the doctor, who sits with his back to the light, and shrouded besides in his vast cavern of a chair.

Doctor Lebœuf was engaged on the morning with which we have to do, in ferreting and fussing among his papers, opening and shutting the drawers in his bureau, and in all sorts of ways disturbing the mass of confused objects by which he was surrounded on all sides. And while thus engaged, he would at intervals pause to address some remark, not always of a wholly complimentary nature, to an oldish woman, who stood at a little distance, watching him with her hands crossed over that region where the earlier processes of digestion — or indigestion, as the case may be—are said to take place. This good lady was apparently of a philosophical disposition, and took all observations, whether con-

veying praise or blame, with entire composure. She wore a thick white cap of inconceivable cleanliness, a blue striped apron, and high-quartered shoes. Looking into the magic crystal in which the events of this history are revealed before me, I can make out nothing more; but it is presumable that this honest woman wore a gown of some sort, and it is probable that she had on stockings as well as shoes.

"What sad confusion," muttered the old doctor,—"wretched, wretched! I can find nothing. If only I had some one to look after things for me! You are no use, Mère Morlot—no use at all."

"Monsieur knows perfectly well that, if I were to attempt to arrange his possessions, I should never hear the last of it. Supposing even I were to remove a little of the dust——"

"Dust—at your peril. I know what that means. No, no, if things are dusted one never sees them again. Besides, I like dust, it makes one sneeze, and that clears the faculties. Ta, ta, ta! I can't find the paper containing the diagnosis of the veuve Garnier. I left it in my blotting-book, I am sure—what has become of it?"

"Bah! don't bother yourself about the veuve Garnier. She'll do well enough, old gossip that she is. Monsieur is too particular."

"What, woman?" cried the doctor in high indignation, "'do well enough,' and 'old gossip,'—are you lost to all sense of humanity? It is as much

my business to attend to the veuve Garnier as it is to cure the préfet of Versailles, old idiot that he is."

"Monsieur has too many free patients. It is improvident, almost sinful."

"Silence, woman. I wish thy husband was here; he *was* of some use to me, and, like an old fool, I must needs let him go roaming about the country with an Englishman, who seems to me to be even madder than the rest of his countrymen. It is my own folly. I never do a good-natured thing without having bitter cause to repent of it. Have you had any news of him—of your husband—lately?"

"The last news I had was mad news enough, certainly, and it arrived this morning."

"Well, and what is it?"

"If monsieur pleases, I will read him the letter."

To this the worthy physician giving an assenting grunt, Madame Morlot began to read.

"'Mère Morlot,' that is how it begins, monsieur."

"Very proper," remarked the doctor,—"very proper indeed."

"'Mère Morlot, you will probably see me back at Versailles in two or three days. You will take occasion to mention this to the master without delay. The medicine-chest is, I believe and hope, all right, but I have been obliged to part company with it. One of the bottles, however, is broken;

we must endeavour by rigid economy to replace it. The leeches are, I trust, doing well, but I have been compelled by circumstances to lose sight of them also for a while. As for my temporary proprietor, the English major, he is, with all respect be it spoken, evidently raving mad. After bumping himself and me all over the country on horseback—*me*, mind, on horseback—after spending unheard-of sums in making researches after the two English ladies who used to live in the Rue Pompadour, he finds them at last in a certain obscure village called St. Amand, and, having done so, what does he do but scamper off away from them in the dead of night, along a deserted road, and through a darkness that prevented your seeing your hand before you. I had followed him for a certain time, till in fact the domestic of Madame d'Elmar, whom you remember, had overtaken us with some letter with which she had been entrusted; but after he had perused this letter, this terrible major, who had previously ridden with some caution, sets off at the most furious pace, galloping along a road which he could not see, and of which he knew next to nothing. I followed at a more prudent pace, calling after this extraordinary major as loudly as I could, but to no purpose. All night long I passed on the road, feeling every step of the way in the darkness, and when at length I arrived at a place called Levet, both myself and the animal I bestrode being utterly exhausted, I

found that this terrific Englishman had arrived three hours before, that his horse was then in the stable, half dead and refusing to eat, and that he himself had set forward on foot for Bourges, a distance of nearly twenty miles. My temporary proprietor had left a message that I was to wait at Levet till the animals were restored, and then take them back to their owner at Bourges, and having delivered them up, follow on to Paris with all despatch. So here am I with two horses, one of them the most vicious of brutes, in my hands—I who detest and mistrust the whole horse tribe. Whether I shall ever get back to Versailles or not, Heaven knows; but if I do, I think it will be a long time before I am persuaded to leave it again. As for M. le Major, he had a start of this letter, and may, for aught I know, be at Paris or in England, or anywhere else at the moment when these lines reach you. If I get back alive, it will be in two or three days after you receive this; if not, I should wish the medicine-chest to be given to my nephew, Jules Morlot, who, I think, has a taste for physic. The leeches I leave to you as a proof of friendly feeling.

(Signed) "'JACQUES MORLOT.

"'Post-scriptum.—I hope you have kept the accounts strictly during my absence; if not—malheur à vous.'"

"There," said Madame Morlot, as she concluded the letter, "there's a good husband; see what letters he writes me when he is away—something like a man." The good woman implicitly believed what she said, and thought her husband a very paragon of domestic amenity.

"Dear me, dear me," sighed the doctor, "what people these English are. And so he found them, after all, did he? Dear me, dear me, what can have happened that he should go away again so hastily? Now, Madame Morlot, you may leave me and go to those accounts your husband speaks of. It is necessary I should have some time undisturbed, as I wish to consider the case of that unhappy Sardinian who lies in such danger in the Rue Basse; so, mind, I can see no one at present—no one at all."

"'Sardinian!'" muttered Madame Morlot to herself, as she left the room, and turning up her eyes to the ceiling as she spoke. "Sardinian! another gratis patient, I'll be bound. It is wicked—it is positively wicked."

The doctor was left alone.

"Poor Ma'm'selle Madeleine—poor girl!" he said to himself. "What can have happened—what can have happened? what can the Englishman have discovered or suspected, that he should leave her so abruptly? A good girl, I know, a good girl—*I* can tell them at a glance, and I know she's a good girl."

The doctor was all this time turning over the leaves of an enormous book, the pages of which were well

filled with manuscript. It seemed to be full of notes and memoranda of a professional nature, and there was, to judge by the presence of certain wonderful hieroglyphics, a good many prescriptions interspersed here and there, but in disorder of course. "This might do, perhaps," he said, pausing at one particular entry, "but it's a hopeless case—one can only relieve, no cure, no cure." The physician proceeded to copy out a prescription; presently he spoke again.

"I suppose I must let the Englishman see him. I suppose he wants to ask his forgiveness for these uncommonly nasty cuts which the major received at his hands in the Palace Gardens. Well, well, we must first get hold of our Englishman, that is the first thing to do." And Doctor Lebœuf went back to his books, and plunged into them more deeply than before. He had read a little, and written a little, and thought a good deal, and was still in deep meditation, when a ring was heard at his door-bell, which was followed by the sound of female voices outside his own door. Presently there was a gentle tap, and the door was quietly opened by Madame Morlot.

"Mère Morlot, mère Morlot," cried the doctor, "what do you mean by this? I am busy; I told you that I could see nobody ——"

"Except," said a well-known voice, speaking in French, but with a slight accent, and Madeleine d'Elmar stood in the door-way.

"Except? Mon Dieu, the very person of all others I most wanted to see!" and the doctor jumped up, and, hastening across the room to meet the young English lady, he embraced her fervently.

"My dear young lady," he cried, "my dear young lady, how glad I am to see you. But are you alone? Where is your aunt? and how ill you are looking!"

"I am not quite alone," said Madeleine, smiling, "for Victorine is with me. My aunt is in Paris, too tired with travelling to move any further to-day. As to my looking ill, it is only fatigue," she added, with the same sweet smile.

"Dear young lady," said the good old boy again, "come here, and rest yourself at once;" and he led her to his own chair, himself taking one of those which were placed for the accommodation of patients.

"You must not be too kind to me," said Miss d'Elmar, and as she spoke the tears were gathering in her eyes. She made a noble effort to keep them back, but it would not do; her throat was choking, and presently she sank forward in the chair, and burying her face in her handkerchief, burst into an agony of tears.

The doctor shuffled about the room, and began clinking bottles, one against the other, in the little inner laboratory, pouring all sorts of restoratives into small glass measures, and then mixing them together, diluting all with that noble medicament

which goes by the name of "aqua distillata." And all the time he kept on muttering to himself,—

"Yes, yes, poor young lady—over fatigued—dreadfully fatigued and exhausted—quite hysterical. Neglected her meals perhaps—yes, yes. Little restorative, little restorative, that will be the thing;" but he did not manage to get that restorative ready for some time; leaving the poor girl full liberty to weep her trouble out.

After a time the doctor began to question his young patient a little.

"So I suppose you are coming back to Versailles again, and to the old rooms in the Rue Pompadour?"

"No, no chance of that," said Madeleine, "for a long time to come, at any rate. We are going farther away immediately, as soon, in fact, as my aunt has taken a very little repose. I ought, indeed, to return at once."

"You mustn't go yet, though," urged the doctor; "I am sure you never came from Paris only to tell me you were going away again. Come now, what can I do to assist you—in any way, you know—any way in the world?"

There was a long pause. At last Miss d'Elmar forced herself to break it.

"Oh, Dr. Lebœuf," she said, "you are so kind, and I *do* want to speak to you about something very much—but I don't know—I feel now I am here as if it were impossible."

"Impossible!" shouted the doctor; "what, to *me*?

Why, you silly child, don't you know that people say everything to me just as if they were talking to themselves. Why, I have had so many strange confidences, and heard such wonderful secrets, that I can almost guess at what is coming before the words are out. Suppose I try to make some guesses as to what you have got to talk to me about? My dear young lady," continued the doctor, speaking more gravely and gently than before, "shall I speak, or will you?"

"Oh, you—you!"

"Well, then, I think that you have come to speak to me about that English gentleman who once stood by you in a trying moment—Major Trelane."

From the first moment when the doctor had spoken of his guessing powers, Miss d'Elmar had known that the mention of that name was coming; yet when it did come she could not keep from blushing, nevertheless.

"I shall construe your silence," continued the doctor, "to mean that it is so; and going on with my conjectures, I guess next that the peculiar nature of the circumstances under which you made this Englishman's acquaintance, and the qualities which you have discovered in him subsequently, have won for him a place—you know you mustn't mind me—in your warmest regard?"

Madeleine did not speak, and the physician went on.

"Come, now, I have helped you through the beginning of this case, but you must tell me the rest. Is there anything—any cause of misunderstanding, I mean—between you? My guessing powers tell me that you have recently seen this Englishman, and that your last meeting ended in his abrupt and sudden departure. How was that?"

"I told him that we must part," said Madeleine, in a low voice, "and we did part."

"Part, part!" cried the impetuous doctor, "but why? When people love each other, I have no patience to hear of their parting. But, stay," said the doctor, interrupting himself, and speaking more gravely, "you *do* love him?"

Madeleine held down her head.

"How can I help doing so?" she said, simply, after a moment.

"Well, and he loves you, I know," the doctor went on; "so what is this nonsense about parting?"

There was silence for a short time. At last Miss d'Elmar seemed to have nerved herself for a great effort. She looked up in the little doctor's face, and took his hand to strengthen herself.

"Doctor Lebœuf," she said, "you say you are used to secrets and to confidences. Will you promise me that what I shall confide to you, you will never reveal till I have told you that you may?"

"Of course I will promise," replied the doctor, gravely, "if you are really in earnest in wishing it."

"Indeed, indeed, I am," the girl said, eagerly. And then, and while by the effort she had been making she was yet able, she told him all—told him in words which she seemed hardly to have chosen herself, and which she could hardly control; told him of her persecution by Lieutenant Tronchet; of her uncle's advocacy of this man's cause; of Trelane's suspicion; of that unhappy meeting at St. Amand; and then, still holding the doctor's hand, but with an averted face, of that sad story which Madame d'Elmar had revealed to her niece—the story of Madeleine's birth, and of her mother's miserable end.

"But, my dear young lady," said the doctor, when he had heard her out, "I take this Englishman to be an honest man, and that being so, there is nothing in this story that obliges you to part. It is mere folly. Come now, release me from my promise, and only let me tell him what you have just told me."

"No, no, no! not for anything in the world! It cannot be; he would hate me—the daughter of one whom he even spoke of, in his delirium, with hatred. No, no; it was not for that that I have told you all this. It was because there is one thing, only one, that you *can* do for me, and that I do entreat of you not to refuse me."

"My dear child, is it likely that I would?"

"I cannot bear," said the poor girl, and her words

were broken with sobs, "I cannot bear, because he is so good, and has been so kind to me, that he should go away with that impression on his mind, that I have been ungrateful—that I have been deceiving him."

"Then let me tell him the truth," the doctor interrupted.

"No, no; but tell him this. Tell him—he will believe you—that you know all the circumstances of the case, that the impediment to our being together, is no fault of mine, that it is a thing over which I never had—never can have, any control—and oh! above all, tell him that there is no one else—no one else—oh! never any one else. Promise me, dear, dear Doctor Lebœuf, that you will tell him this—he will believe you, though he would not me."

Long and earnestly did the kind physician plead to be allowed to say more than this which was permitted him, but he pleaded in vain. To be exculpated from that charge of ingratitude; to have the one hope left to her that Trelane should be able to think of her from whom he was parted without hatred: this was all that Madeleine wanted, and more than this was not to be thought of.

And so that hurried interview came to an end, and the poor old doctor, left again to his solitude, could almost have imagined, so quickly had Madeleine come and gone, that he had fallen asleep in his arm-chair, and dreamed of what had really happened.

This visit of Miss d'Elmar's was not the only one that the worthy doctor was destined to receive on that particular day.

The reader wonders perhaps (if, indeed, he condescends to place the emotion of wonder at my disposal) what has become of Major Trelane, and how it happens that he, who left the village of St. Amand before it was possible for Madame d'Elmar and her niece to do so, had not yet appeared at Versailles, though Miss d'Elmar had, as we have seen already, arrived there.

Bitter and unsparing were our Englishman's self-reproaches on that night of his sudden departure from St. Amand. What folly had he been guilty of? How had he neglected his duties to his own family and friends, in order that he might go wandering up and down a foreign country after people of whom he knew nothing, and who were surrounded with a degree of mystery which was in itself suspicious in the last degree. And all this time in England, in his own country, they of whose love and worth he was so well assured, were pressing him to return—were longing to have him with them. It was ungrateful, it was almost wicked, that he should be spending the time of his leave away from them. But it was not too late; there was time yet, and he would return now, as fast as he was able to travel, to England, and try to forget all that had happened, as far as to forget was possible.

When Trelane reached Bourges, he was so utterly exhausted with the violent physical exertion he had undergone, as well as the mental emotion which had helped to wear him out, that he had no sooner entered the train which was to carry him to Paris, than he fell into a deep repose, which lasted, except when the necessary interruptions connected with the journey caused him to be disturbed, till he reached the capital. The home-longing was now strong upon him; and the very sight of Paris was so hateful to him that he determined even now, when it was again night, to continue his journey, and push on to Calais, or at any rate to Amiens, without longer delay than the waiting for the train implied.

Now it so happened that the long slumber which had descended upon our Englishman had by this time exhausted itself, and as he journeyed now in a northerly direction away from Paris, he felt as completely wakeful as before he had been overpowered with lethargy. And so turning over and over all sorts of thoughts in his mind, there came among others the reflection that he was doing an unkind and discourteous thing in thus turning his back upon France, without a single word of gratitude or farewell to the one person who had been kind to him, and whom everything had taught him to value and respect. Dr. Lebœuf had at immense personal inconvenience lent him a valuable servant, whose loss the physician must have felt every hour, and yet here was he, who

had besides so much to make him feel under an obligation to the doctor, going away without saying even good-by, or confiding to him, as he was in duty bound, the result of that expedition in which Lebœuf had shown himself interested from the beginning. Trelane tried to put these compunctions from him, but he could not manage it; and who knows whether some lingering hope that he might hear something about Madeleine, or even whether the wish to have an opportunity of speaking of her to the kind old doctor, may not have increased our Englishman's sense of the wrong which he was doing Dr. Lebœuf in leaving France without visiting him?

In fact, by the time that Trelane had got to Amiens, he had pretty well made up his mind that it was his bounden duty to return to Paris and Versailles with as little delay as possible. A strange sort of influence seemed to be over him, which he could not resist, and so it happened that late on the afternoon of the day on which Miss d'Elmar had paid that short and hurried visit to Dr. Lebœuf, our Englishman found his way to Versailles and to the apartments of the learned doctor.

"I was just thinking of advertising for you," said the old Frenchman, "in the *Galignani*, or in your native *Times*."

"What, did you think I had made off with your familiar spirit, the sagacious Monsieur Morlot?" asked Trelane.

"No, not exactly that. But the fact is that, by a most curious combination of circumstances, there has come under my hand as a patient—whom do you think?"

"Nay," answered Trelane, "I have not the faintest idea."

"Well, then, I must tell you. After doctoring you, for I know not how long a time, for certain wounds received in a certain encounter in the Versailles Gardens, what happens to me next but to find myself using all my skill in doctoring the very man who inflicted those wounds."

"What," cried Trelane, "the man of whom we have been so long in search?"

"The same," answered the doctor. "But you need be in no hurry," for Trelane had mechanically risen to his feet when he heard this intelligence. "The poor wretch would have little chance of making his escape now, even if he wished it. I saw him this very day, and, in my opinion, his end is not far off."

"And who or what is this man?"

"That," the doctor answered, "you shall find out for yourself. For the strangest thing about it all is, that this man has been, during the whole time of his illness, urgent about one thing and one thing only, and that is that he may be allowed to see you, and hold communication with you before he dies."

"With me?" echoed the Englishman; "what can

he have to communicate to me? And you think him in immediate danger?" he added.

"He may live six months, six days, six hours, but he is bespoke; his death-warrant has been signed, and the executioner is doing his work."

"Let us go at once," said Trelane.

As they walked along, our Englishman learned something of the circumstances which had brought the Sardinian and Dr. Lebœuf together. It appeared that the doctor had been visiting one of his patients in the poor part of the town, no less a person, in fact, than that "veuve Garnier" who had been so disparagingly alluded to by Madame Morlot as an "old gossip." Her gossiping tendencies had, however, on this particular occasion, done some good, for, her own ailments disposed of, she began to talk to the doctor, whose benevolence was well known in the neighbourhood, about a certain foreigner who had excited some commotion among the neighbours, by taking an entirely empty room in an adjacent house, in one corner of which, after reaching it with considerable difficulty, he had laid himself down with the express purpose and intention, as it seemed, of departing this life with all convenient speed. The man did not appear to be entirely destitute, and some attempt had been made by the neighbours to supply him with some of the necessaries, if not the comforts, of life. But he was still, the veuve Garnier added, in a most pitiable condition, and it would be a charity if the

learned physician would just step in at the house indicated, which was all in his way, and pronounce an opinion as to what was the matter with the stranger, and what could be done to relieve his sufferings.

Such an appeal was not likely to be made in vain to so good a man as Dr. Lebœuf. He turned aside into the house to which he had been directed, and guided and accompanied by half-a-dozen professional idlers, had no difficulty in finding the room in which the Sardinian lay—as Lebœuf saw at a glance—in a most dangerous and critical state. The doctor lost no time in putting the idlers out of the chamber, and then proceeded to examine the sick man, with a view of ascertaining what sort of a bill of health it was possible to give him. The result of this proceeding was in the last degree unsatisfactory. The man was suffering from disease of the heart of the most dangerous kind, and Dr. Lebœuf saw at a glance that it was a case in which cure was not to be thought of for a single instant.

The good physician visited his new patient daily, and was able to afford considerable relief to his more distressing symptoms. It was on the occasion of one of these visits, and when doctor and patient were alone together, that a conversation took place between them, which revealed, for the first time, to Lebœuf who his patient really was. The man had heard from the local gossips the whole story of that affray in the

Versailles Gardens, in which he had himself taken so important a part—a part, however, of which he was careful not to make any mention. He heard how Dr. Lebœuf had cured the Englishman of his wounds, and how he had become the intimate friend both of the English major and of Madame d'Elmar and her niece. To all this he had listened in silence, and it was only to the doctor himself that he at last resolved to speak of his own share in the transaction. "You are not the man," he said to him, on the occasion of one of his daily visits, "to turn upon one in my condition; and if you do, I know not that I care much. It is all the same now to me where I spend my few remaining days." Then he told the doctor that it was he who had wounded the Englishman, though he had only done it in self-defence, knowing that if once the police laid hands upon him, he would be infallibly sent back to the galleys, from which he had escaped, while the sentence under which he lay was yet uncompleted. He had only intended to strike his opponent on the arm or hand, in order to compel him to relax his hold, and had never sought to inflict serious injury upon him. After making this statement, which, as may be supposed, excited no small amount of surprise in his hearer, the man began next to question his physician very earnestly about Madame d'Elmar and her niece, and also as to the chance of his (Doctor Lebœuf's) meeting with or hearing from

Trelane, whom he expressed an earnest desire to see and speak with. To these inquiries, as far as Madame d'Elmar and her niece were concerned, the doctor refused to give any answers, declining to tell whether they were still at Versailles, or to reply to the more remarkable question whether there was any attachment formed between Trelane and Miss d'Elmar. To all these inquiries the worthy doctor answered with some severity, that the conduct of the Sardinian towards the young lady had been such as to make it impossible that any conversation of which she was the subject could be allowed to proceed. The man sighed, and muttered something about his being misunderstood; that the doctor did not know all, and that if he did, his opinion would be a different one.

As to the major, Lebœuf's answer was ready enough. He might return to Versailles at any moment; and if he did so the doctor undertook that his patient's request should be laid before him, with as little delay as might be.

And this was how it came to pass that our Englishman and Dr. Lebœuf were now on their way to the house where the Sardinian lay dying.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE REVELATION.

It was towards the poorest quarter of the town of Versailles that Trelane was now being conducted by the worthy doctor. To him such regions were most familiar, the number of his gratis patients being enough to cause serious alarm to so frugal a personage as Madame Morlot. In poor neighbourhoods, even in our own country, there is always a strong tendency in the inhabitants to swarm about their doorways, a tendency which arises no doubt from the uninviting nature of the accommodation within. This is still more the case, however, abroad, and there was quite a little crowd of matrons and children, and some few men besides, loitering about in the small alley which was the present destination of our Englishman and his medical friend. A slight murmur of approbation arose from the bystanders, as the doctor appeared, and the excitement was obviously increased by the presence of the stranger, of whom it was evident great things were expected.

The veuve Garnier (convalescent) was herself taking the air on the steps before the door, and as a privileged person, took upon her, after some time given to the details of her own ailments, to explain that the foreigner was much worse, and that all the neighbours had thought that he must have died in the course of the last few hours.

Rejecting the offers of all sorts of amateur nurses and assistants, the doctor peremptorily announced that no one, save the gentleman by whom he was accompanied, need attend him to the sick man's chamber, and that if he required any additional help, he would send for it. Unless he did so send for it, it was forbidden that any one should approach the room while he (the doctor) was in it. Lebœuf's word was law among these people, though it must be acknowledged that this particular fiat was by no means a popular one.

Trelane and his guide now turned aside into the doorway of a gloomy and very dirty-looking house, and groping their way along the passage, came at length to the foot of a very dark staircase, constructed on the well principle, and up which the doctor led the way with a confidence which proclaimed his familiarity with the place. After ascending two flights, the doctor paused for breath. They could hear the whispering of the gossips down below, in the passage and about the doorway. The well-staircase acted as a conductor or speaking-

tube, and brought the sound to them almost intelligibly.

"We are at the door now," said Lebœuf, pointing to that of a back-room on the landing, where they stood. "You will find the man much changed. Besides the ravages of disease, I suspect, from your original description of him, that he used to wear a large beard. This, probably with a view of escaping detection, has some time since been removed, and has only grown again since the man has been ill. You must be prepared for rather a ghastly spectacle," the doctor added, and with that he opened very softly the door which he had previously indicated; and then, when Trelane had followed him into the room, closed it again behind him and turned the key in the lock.

Slight as the noise had been which Trelane and the doctor had made in entering, it had been sufficient to attract the attention of the single occupant of the room. He turned slightly on his bed, and uttered a faint stifled cry—of pleasure—of pain—of surprise—who knows? The man he had wished to see was there. The cry was likely enough one of satisfaction.

Trelane's eyes went at once to the sick man's face. The room was dark, but not so dark as the staircase had been, so that our Englishman could see tolerably distinctly, having been prepared by the greater obscurity outside to find the lesser darkness almost

brilliant. The man was greatly changed, but it was he—he of the cemetery, of l'Idalie, of the Versailles Gardens. There he lay, helpless and suffering, on a sort of bed that had been made up of fragments of furniture supplied by the neighbours, with bedding and linen from the doctor's stores. That bed was almost the only thing in the room. A little three-legged table stood near it, on which was placed the medicine and the objects of which the invalid had need, and a chair with no back to it was also by the bedside. There was a basin and water in one corner of the room, but these were placed upon the floor. But one sign of comfort was there to make the squalor of the place endurable—a few logs were smouldering in the enormous fireplace, and stacked in one corner of the apartment was a further supply of them; whether they came from the same quarter as the bedding and linen, of which mention has already been made, it is impossible to say.

Ah! here was a sorry end to come to: to lie in solitude and pain upon that miserable couch, in that bare and ghastly room, indebted to a chance for the common necessaries of a dying man's declining existence—that chance being that the doctor of the poor happened in this case to be a man of a gentle and compassionate nature. To lie without one relation near, without one friend made during life to soothe the hour of its extinction—no brother or sister, wife or daughter, to nurse the weary head, and wipe

the dews of approaching death with pious hand away; and, misery of miseries, to lie there too, conscious of a black list of crimes and offences which each year of the life so near its end had contributed to swell. Think of this, you who, glancing along the great highway of duty that looks so dull and monotonous, turn with longing eyes to the green lanes, and honeysuckle hedges, the turfy paths bordered with roses to which pleasure beckons you. "Things are not what they seem." That dull highway with its rough pavements, that uninteresting road exposed to the fierce heat of the sun as to the wind and rain and snow, is a pleasanter path when once you are embarked on it than it looks at first sight. The road improves as you advance; there is good company by the way, and the goal to which it leads is happiness.

Now this is the old story, the words of the preacher from the beginning. But the fact is that in such scenes as this with which we have to do, these truisms, as they are called, will come before one with a wonderful and irresistible force. What misery was this? What would a man not do to escape it? what would he not suffer, what would he not forego? As Trelane looked on at this scene he did acknowledge that his own recent trials and sorrows were widely removed from such misery as this, and the reader who has been witness of the sufferings of our poor heroine, Madeleine d'Elmar, will feel as he

turns from the thought of them to a contemplation of this greater misery, that a sort of tender morning sun-light is over the one picture, while the other lies in the dense shadow of a valley which the mountains darken.

From the moment when Trelane entered the room, the eyes of the sick man were fixed upon him with a strange and wistful curiosity. It has been said that the Sardinian was much changed since our Englishman had last seen him, and as Trelane looked at him with more attention he was struck with horror, and, it must be owned, with compassion. The man was so shrunk; his face looked half the size it used to be, and all the edges of the bones were rendered terribly prominent by the falling away of the flesh and the sinking in of the flaccid skin. The man's beard was beginning to grow again, and Trelane noticed those two white flakes which have been before spoken of as growing near the corners of the mouth; slender means of identification these, that could be removed with the sweep of a razor.

When trees are to be felled in a forest, it is the custom of the woodcutters to go round some little time before and mark the doomed trunks with a white cross. Death does this sometimes with men, and, of a certainty, his mark was set upon the face of this Sardinian.

"Won't you come nearer to me?" he said, still with his eyes fixed on Trelane's face. The English-

man went up to the bed, and seated himself beside it.

The Sardinian spoke in French, but afterwards he would sometimes say a few words in the English language. His voice was very faint, and there was a sort of rattling sound in his throat which augured ill.

"You wished to see this gentleman, and to speak to him," said Dr. Lebœuf, kindly. "Is there anything we can either of us do to help or comfort you?"

The sick man still kept his eyes fixed upon the Englishman, and he now addressed him for the second time.

"Do you want now to hand me over to the authorities? Are you still longing for vengeance?"

"Oh, no, no," the doctor broke in; "shocking—don't talk about such things. You've got other things to talk to this gentleman about. So no more about 'vengeance.'"

"You have nothing to fear from mine," said the Englishman; "if it had not been dead long ago, I think it would at least have parted company with me at the door of this room."

"You have more cause for vindictive feeling than you know of," said the Italian, speaking slowly, and as if the words came from him with difficulty. "There is hereditary vengeance as well as personal vengeance."

"'Hereditary vengeance?'" repeated Trelane, whose interest was becoming powerfully excited, and who *felt* that strange tidings were soon to reach him. "What do you mean by 'hereditary vengeance?'"

"I mean that in a few minutes, if my breath lasts, you will have more reason to hate me than you have had yet. Now, will you answer me one question? You love Madeleine d'Elmar?"

The bronze of Trelane's complexion became many shades darker, and, for a time, he was silent. He remembered the circumstances by which his attention had first been drawn to this man's existence. He remembered the sort of persecution which Madeleine had undergone.

"Is it necessary that this young lady's name should be mentioned between us?" he asked, almost coldly.

"It is," replied the Italian, and then, as the Englishman still paused, he burst out with a sort of weak passion that brought the blood into his ashy face, and made the perspiration gather on his brow. "Why do you hesitate? What harm can it do to answer me? I am dying—be merciful."

"I do love her," Trelane answered, gravely.

"And she, does she return your love?"

At this the doctor broke in once more, "Of course she does—no doubt of it; a good young lady as ever lived," and then he pulled himself up short, feeling he had said too much.

But the sick man's eyes were fixed still upon Trelane, and he waited, hanging on his words.

"Once," said the Englishman, "I should have said plainly, 'Yes' in answer to your question, but now I hesitate."

"And why?"

"For some reason," the Englishman went on, "which remains a mystery—she now avoids me."

"Poor child," the Italian interrupted, musingly. A weakness seemed to come upon him so great that it was almost like a trance.

The doctor, however, administered a restorative which stood ready, and the man revived.

"My time is short," he said, "and I must speak. That 'mystery,' that 'reason,' the mention of which has filled you with mistrust—*I* have the key to that mystery."

"Great heaven!" the doctor thought to himself, "does this man know the story that I heard this morning?" The doctor then listened for the rest with an eagerness as breathless as that of Trelane himself.

After a pause of some duration, the sick man spoke again.

"I told you just now, that in a few minutes you would have fresh cause to entertain a feeling of vengeance towards me, and that it would be vengeance of a hereditary kind. Does your memory go back to the time—it may, to judge by your

apparent age—when your eldest brother—Alfred, I think, was his name—went away to the frozen seas, and died?"

"It does," was the answer, rapidly uttered. "I remember it all but too well; but, in heaven's name, who are you, and how came you to know of these things?"

The Italian put up his hand to motion the Englishman to silence.

"You will remember, then," he continued, "that he went away in the first transport of grief and resentment which followed his discovery that the young lady to whom he was engaged was privately married to a Sardinian, into whose company a mere chance had thrown her. Do you remember all this?"

"All."

"Do you remember the Sardinian's name?"

"I think I do. It was—Sylvio—Salvio. No."

"It was Francesco Salvi," said the Italian.

In one moment the truth, bearing down all before it with the force of an irresistible conviction, burst in upon the Englishman's mind. By a sort of mechanical and involuntary movement, he started from his seat, and drew backward from the bed.

"You are the murderer of my brother!" he whispered, almost inaudibly.

"I told you," said the Sardinian, sadly, "that your vengeance would revive."

Trelane sank again into the chair by the bedside, and buried his face in his hands. There was a long silence broken only by the abrupt ejaculations of the doctor and by the harsh and grating sound of the dying man's respiration.

"But what," cried the Englishman, looking suddenly up as an undefined doubt passed through his mind, "what has this to do—you were speaking, to begin with, of Madeleine d'Elmar—what has this to do with her?"

"Much," gasped the other; "too much. That marriage with the Italian," the man still spoke of himself as the third person, "that marriage, which, because the adventurer had already a wife alive, was no marriage—the fruit of it was—a daughter."

"Ah," cried Trelane, "the light breaks in upon me, and it is blinding."

"Her mother died, and the child's aunt, who was married to a Frenchman, a Monsieur d'Elmar, took charge of the little deserted creature. I believe it was in accordance with a wish expressed by the mother on her deathbed, that the child was christened by the name of—of MADELEINE!"

As the man uttered that last word, he fell back upon his pillow with the air of one whose task was finished. By an effort indicative of a will of no mean power, he had forced himself to complete that task. Now it *was* completed, and the very life seemed to have gone out of him.

"*Her* father!" whispered Dr. Lebœuf, speaking to himself, but audibly.

Trelane absolutely shuddered as he heard his own thought thus put into words.

"Her father!" the sounds rang monotonously in his ears. Madeleine the daughter of this man—of a convict—the daughter of the man and woman whom from a boy he had been taught to think of with something of almost a religious horror.

"Her father!" and this was why this man had haunted the girl's footsteps, and sought to gaze upon her face and speak with her. And Madeleine who had noted that in his approaches to her there was no taint of disrespect. Ah! now it was all explained. Her father—her father!

Long and unbroken was the silence. Trelane sat as one stunned, the same thoughts, and the same words passing through his mind in a continuous, involuntary succession. He had no control over them. He sought to have none. Every now and then the shapes in the kaleidoscope would make some new pattern, and these new and wonderful discoveries would take some fresh shape or arrange themselves under a different light.

The Italian, Salvi, remained in entire repose, indeed he seemed to have fallen into a kind of half-slumber. The doctor held his patient's wrist and counted the weak and intermittent pulse.

And now, in the midst of all that was so sad and

so bewildering in the disclosures which had taken place, Trelane found one element of something more than consolation—it was almost gladness. He felt a restored confidence in Madeleine d'Elmar. Now he felt how great had been the misery of being, as he had been for a time, without that confidence, since the delight of regaining it could infuse something of joy into such a moment as this. Yes, he could now believe her—believe her words—believe her letter. He pressed his hand upon it as he spoke. He took it out and read it, and reading, for the first time understood it. She had known this story, known it all, and especially that part of it which bore reference to the time before she herself was born, and doubtless she had formed even exaggerated notions of the strength of that "hereditary vengeance" of which this man had spoken. And that hereditary vengeance *had* existed no doubt once. But what had become of it? Towards whom was it to be entertained? Was that miserable object lying there, within a few hours of the end of a wretched misspent life, was he a fit subject for vengeance? Had it not fallen on him already with a violence that might satisfy his worst enemy? And his unhappy victim laid nearly twenty years ago in the grave, was it towards her that the vindictive feeling was to direct itself? As well might it fall on her child, on Madeleine, so true and innocent.

It was then so great a joy to Trelane to be able to think of Madeleine with neither mistrust nor suspicion in his heart, that he could even look with something almost of gratitude in his feeling, upon this wretched sinner who had been the means of dispelling his doubts.

Trelane was presently aroused from these thoughts by the voice of Dr. Lebœuf. The worthy physician had been sitting on the bed watching the sick man, and while he did so, finding time occasionally to rejoice within himself at the thought that his young favourite was now cleared in the Englishman's eyes, and that the secret which he had so longed for permission to reveal, had come out in a manner beyond his (the doctor's) control. It was in a very low voice that he now said to Trelane:

"I believe that this miserable man is even nearer to his end than I thought."

"Can he take no nourishment?" asked Trelane.

"None whatever. He is supported entirely on brandy and other stimulants."

Again there was a silence. At last the Italian half-opened his languid eyes, and seemed to wish to speak. The doctor leant over him eagerly, for his voice was hardly audible.

"There is a cemetery," he gasped—"*he* knows where," indicating Trelane—"to which she sometimes goes; let me lie there—you will!" he added, with a momentary violence.

The doctor promised, and after a while the man spoke again:—

"Let her know. Perhaps, she will visit my grave also; at least, it will clear me in her eyes. I only wanted to listen to her voice. I begged of her, that I might—hear her—speak."

These words were uttered with long intervals between them, and latterly as if spoken in a doze. Indeed, the dying man sank, almost before he had ceased to speak, into a kind of undeveloped slumber, such as that which had descended upon him before.

The doctor whispered to Trelane,—

"He must not be left now. Can you go to my house, and, if Morlot has returned, as I think he must by this time, send him to me directly. If not perhaps you can find your old friend and nurse, Monsieur Charvet, and send him, and you will return yourself, won't you? for we must organize a system of night watching."

Trelane assured his old friend that all his directions should be obeyed, and opening the door as softly as possible, prepared to leave the room; but even the slight noise made in turning the key in the lock disturbed the light sleep of the Italian.

"Is he going away?" he said, suddenly starting up from the pillow.

"I shall be back very soon," the Englishman answered, pausing on the threshold.

The sick man whispered something to the doctor.

"He asks me," said Lebœuf, "if, as he is so near the grave, you would bid him 'good-by' before you go?"

Trelane closed the door, and returning to the bedside, took the emaciated and clammy hand which lay outside the bed.

"Do you forgive me?" whispered the man.

"I do, from the very bottom of my heart."

The Italian faintly pressed the Englishman's hand.

"May God deal mercifully with you!" said Trelane, and with that he hurried from the room.

Trelane paid but small attention to the questions of the neighbours who clustered about him as he left the house, and sped away upon his mission.

CHAPTER IX.

DECLARATION OF WAR.

On reaching Doctor Lebœuf's house, Trelane found that Monsieur Morlot had not arrived, nor had any fresh tidings of him been received by his better half, who made this announcement to our Englishman with rather a grim face, plainly expressing that she should hold him responsible for any disaster which might happen to her Phœnix of husbands.

Trelane did not lose much time in conversation with this good lady, but set off once more in the direction of that old house in the Rue Pompadour, with which he had so many and such strange associations.

As he turned in at the porte-cochere, he heard some one holding forth on the subject of furniture and apartments—about moving the former and leaving the latter—and it seemed to him that the voice which he heard was by no means unfamiliar to him. He turned into the porter's lodge from which the sound of this voice came, and found himself face to face with Monsieur le Capitaine d'Elmar.

"Parbleu, monsieur le major, you come just in time, if you should happen to want apartments at Versailles. Here are some to let, which I can recommend."

"Do you mean those of Madame d'Elmar and——"

"Never mind whose they are; they belong to madame nobody just now, for they are to let."

Trelane smothered the anger which the impertinence of this reply aroused within him, or rather he put his wrath away for a time; there was a score of some length establishing itself between these gentlemen, which would have, at some time or other, to be settled.

"Where are these apartments situated?" asked our Englishman, in a tone of some restraint.

"They are on the first floor. Perhaps you would like to see them?" This was a part of d'Elmar's plan of pretending to ignore Trelane's previous intercourse with the former inhabitants of these rooms. Trelane, however, accepted his proposal. He was not desirous that Monsieur Charvet, who was present, should hear all that passed between him and the captain.

"I should like to see them," was his answer.

"Monsieur Charvet, I think you did not close the doors when we were upstairs just now?" asked Alexis.

"On the contrary," replied the porter, "they are wide open, and monsieur can ascend on the instant."

"Let me show you the way," sneered d'Elmar, in the same insolent tone, and he led on out of the porter's lodge.

Trelane stayed behind to make an arrangement with Monsieur Charvet as to relieving the good doctor for a time of his present charge, and then, having told him when to go and having bidden him use all despatch on the road, he followed le Capitaine d'Elmar upstairs.

Trelane entered once again the well-known sitting-room and closed the door. Alexis was strutting about rather uneasily and humming a tune, or rather a compound of many tunes.

"D'Elmar," said Trelane, seating himself in a large fauteuil, while his companion perched himself on the edge of a table with his back to the light, "we used to be friends—great friends; why are we so no longer?"

"I don't know but that we are," said the other, with an assumed carelessness. "I don't understand you."

"You *do* understand me," said Trelane, sternly.

"Very well, I suppose you know best; but we came up here to settle about the apartments. Had we not better stick to that subject?"

"I take the apartments," replied Trelane. "The particulars I will arrange through an agent. So there is that subject disposed of."

"Then I conclude that our interview may now come to an end. I see no use in prolonging it."

"There is this use," the Englishman answered, "in prolonging it. It gives you an opportunity of explaining certain things which seem to me to need explanation."

"The opportunity, as far as I am concerned, may pass," said Alexis, with an effort to be cool.

"But, as far as I am concerned," replied Trelane, sternly, "it may *not* pass."

"What do you mean by speaking to me in that imperious tone?" cried the other, firing up on the instant.

"And what do *you* mean," asked Trelane in turn, "by adopting towards me a tone that is far more insulting? Why do you pretend to be ignorant of things that you know perfectly? This very day, nay, a moment since, you asked me if I would like to see these very rooms, as if you did not know that I was not only familiar with them, but have lived in them for days together. Why do you pretend to ignore this as well as the accident which was the cause of my being here? Why do you withhold from me all confidence on a subject on which I have surely earned a right to speak? Why do you absolutely refuse to speak of the ladies who once lived in these rooms—of Madame d'Elmar and her niece? What! have you forgotten the past entirely? What

has become of your former self? Why have you changed in this manner?"

"I have not changed," retorted d'Elmar, angrily. "You have *come in my way.* If you had done so formerly, you would have found me what I am now."

"Come in your way?" repeated the Englishman.

"Yes; 'come in my way,' if you will have it. What are those ladies? Since you want me to talk of them I will. What are they to you, or you to them? If I have plans for my niece——"

"Miss d'Elmar is not your niece."

"Niece or no niece, if I have plans for her, what is that to you? If I have a marriage to propose to her, which will be for her happiness——"

"Her happiness! Her misery, you mean. Do you pretend to me for one moment that the marriage you speak of is anything but distasteful and abhorrent in the last degree to this young lady?"

"Mon Dieu, monsieur. You talk of my want of confidence; you seem at any rate to be indemnified for it by a considerable amount of the confidence of my niece. By heavens, sir, I ask once more, what affair is this of yours? what have you to do with it? by what right do you interfere?"

"By the right, to begin with, which every one has to interfere when he sees a helpless and innocent person persecuted, by those who are more powerful than herself, to do what she detests. By that general

right first, and afterwards by a right of which you may perhaps hear more hereafter."

"If you mean," said the Frenchman, white with anger, "that you seriously propose to put yourself forward as a candidate for Miss d'Elmar's affections, I may as well tell you, to save trouble, that reasons exist which render any such idea entirely impracticable."

"Reasons, I presume," said Trelane, quietly, "connected with the pretensions of your friend, Monsieur Tronchet?"

"Reasons connected with my own firm determination to dispose of the hand of my niece as I think proper."

"Firm determination in one person may be met by firm determination in another. What happens then?"

The Frenchman's power of controlling himself was fast going.

"I tell you," he cried, "that there are other reasons besides—reasons known to me, unknown to you."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Trelane, gravely. "Suppose they are *not* unknown to me? Suppose I tell you that those reasons are connected with this young lady's birth, and with the past history of members of my own family? Suppose I tell you that such reasons affect, not by the fraction of a shadow, the purity and innocence of Madeleine

d'Elmar, and that I cast such reasons from me as no reasons at all."

"What!" cried the other, "has the girl had the face to tell you her own story?"

"No," replied Trelane, "she has not. I would to heaven she had long since."

"Then her aunt, the wretched weak creature——"

"You are mistaken again. Madame d'Elmar was as silent on this subject as her niece."

"I tell you," replied d'Elmar, furiously, "that one of them must—you are speaking an untruth."

Trelane shrank as if he had been struck.

"These rooms are mine now," he said, as soon as he could command his voice, "and I order you to leave them."

"You sit down more quietly under an accusation of falsehood than I should be inclined to do," sneered the Frenchman. This taunt was uttered with an intention.

"In my country," said Trelane, proudly, "we hold it to be folly to place our lives at the disposal of those whom we have ceased to respect or believe."

"And in my country," retorted the other, "a man who calls himself an officer and a gentleman is expected to defend those titles, when, as in the present case, they are attacked at the sword's point."

"Then," cried Trelane, whom these well-directed taunts had at length thrown entirely off his balance,

"you shall not find me behindhand in obeying the customs of the country in which I am living. I hope you understand me, sir."

This was just what d'Elmar had all this time been trying to bring about.

"I do understand you," he said. The sneer was gone now from his tone, and it was with something almost of courtesy that he bowed to our Englishman, and left the room without another word.

Trelane sank down into the seat from which, during the more angry part of the preceding colloquy, he had risen, and gave full way to the thoughts which pressed in upon his mind. What had come upon him now? In what was he involved? This contingency was one so utterly unexpected, that it had taken him by surprise more completely than any other could have done. Trelane had always been accustomed to hear duelling laughed at, talked of as a Quixotic thing, a remnant of the dark ages. Formerly, when men lived in a duelling period, it was necessary for a man on entering life to make up his mind once for all what he intended to do in case he found himself drifting into a quarrel which was likely to end seriously. It was necessary then to have settled opinions on the subject of duelling, but now a man might as well devote his time and thoughts to the propriety or impropriety of wearing hair-powder as occupy himself with reflections on the lawfulness or unlawful-

ness of the duello. And yet here Trelane found himself in one moment, and through the utterance of a hasty word, involved, and that beyond the possibility of retreat, in the necessity of meeting this man, who had once been his friend, but who was now his bitter enemy. To have the blood of such an one upon his hands, would be to him an unbearable thing. True, his very profession and business was the shedding of blood, but it was not blood that had tingled in a hand which he had grasped in friendship, and, besides, between public war and private war there is all the difference in the world.

Our Englishman's reflections, then, were of the most painful kind as he sat in those apartments which belonged once to Madame d'Elmar, but which were now, temporarily at least, his own. It was almost with a superstitious feeling that he had taken those rooms. Had they passed into the hands of strangers, he would have felt as if something that connected him with those two English ladies had gone away out of his reach. It was a sort of link between him and them. Besides, he actually loved those rooms, and he thought that perhaps, if he kept a claim over them, they might come some day to be occupied again as they had been when first he saw them.

Trelane's reflections were broken in upon by the remembrance that it was time for him to return

to the house were he had left Dr. Lebœuf in attendance on the dying Sardinian. As he passed out, he stopped for a short time at the porter's lodge to speak to Madame Charvet, who was keeping it during her husband's absence. Trelane briefly informed the good woman that he had determined to take the apartments, and inquired of her the address of the person in whose hands were placed the business arrangements connected with the letting of the rooms. As he was leaving the conciergerie, by some whimsical chance the remembrance of Madame Ponsard came into his head. Madame Ponsard, the reader will remember, was the dressmaker whose extraordinary devotion to balls and fêtes was dwelt upon in an earlier portion of this work.

"What has become of her?" Trelane asked. "Is she still here?"

"No, monsieur," Madame Charvet replied, "she has left us a long time. Her aged mother died, and after that she could not bear the place, and she and her sister left the house."

"And so there is an end of her," said Trelane, musingly.

"Ah, she was a good woman after all," said Madame Charvet, who, while the dressmaker and she inhabited the same house, was never tired of complaining of her late hours. "She was fond of a dance, of a pleasure party, of gaiety, but she

was a good woman in spite of it, and as for her propriety, it was unimpeachable."

Trelane did not stay for a longer analysis of Madame Ponsard's character. His mind was already wandering to other things, and he was anxious to be away. He turned back, however, when he had gone a little way, to tell Madame Charvet that if any gentleman called there and wished to see him he should be back by nine o'clock in the evening at latest. Then he went to the man of business whose direction he had received, in order to make the necessary arrangements about the apartments in the Rue Pompadour, and a few pecuniary objections being made on Trelane's part, the bargain was soon concluded, and the rooms were his own.

And now another subject pressed its claims upon his attention. He had no doubt that after what had taken place it would not be long before he received a visit from some friend of d'Elmar's, and he thought it probable that the friend in question would be no other than the Lieutenant Tronchet. It was with this in his mind that he had left those directions with Madame Charvet; but now another difficulty came in his way. This emissary from d'Elmar, whoever he might be, would require to be referred to some friend who would be able to discuss with him the particulars of the meeting which, as far as Trelane could see, appeared now certain to take place. And,

supposing he was thus required to name a friend, how was he to do so? Who did he know, who could serve him in this emergency half dreadful, and half—as Trelane, with his English feeling, could not help considering it—ludicrous?

Our Englishman turned over in his mind all sorts of ways of meeting this difficulty. Should he go to the depôt quartered at Versailles, and, stating who he was and what was the nature of his entanglement, request the assistance of any one of the officers who might be disposed to befriend him? or suppose he went out alone and unseconded, trusting to the honour of his opponent—or suppose—

He was at that moment approaching the house where he had left the Sardinian so near his end and the doctor in attendance upon him, and in one instant the thought of the good physician and the possibility that he might be able to assist him flashed across his mind. "I shall have much expostulation to listen to, much argument to encounter," Trelane thought to himself; but the doctor is a good man, and one whom I love and respect, and I would rather have such an one for a companion than a man who was wanting in these qualities, even though he were perfectly versed in every article of the so-called code of honour.

When Trelane reached the room on the second floor, in which the sick man lay, he opened the door very quietly and was about to enter the apartment,

when Monsieur Charvet, the porter, who had been left in charge, made signs to him not to advance, and, coming forward on tiptoe, drew him out of the room.

"The man," he said, as soon as he had softly closed the door, "is in a profound slumber, and Doctor Lebœuf has given strict orders that his sleep is not to be disturbed. The doctor left word, also, that you were to follow him to his house, and there partake of dinner, of which he thought you must stand in need." And with that, having delivered his message, Monsieur Charvet retreated again into the sick man's room and closed the door after him.

The door of Doctor Lebœuf's house was opened by no less a person than Monsieur Morlot, who had at length found his way home, and between whom and our major a most affectionate greeting took place, rendered none the less cordial by the fact that, before entering the doctor's rooms, Trelane drew his former attendant aside and made him a very handsome present as a compensation for all that he had recently undergone, and for his exertions in our Englishman's service.

The worthy doctor was just sitting down to dinner. He was full of jokes at Monsieur Morlot's expense, all connected, of course, with his recent exploits during his journey with Trelane. The doctor would intimate that he was afraid that it would be dull work for his familiar to settle down to the unexciting routine of the Versailles life after wandering about

the country "en grand seigneur," or would ironically inquire how he expected to keep his health without the horse-exercise to which he had been recently accustomed.

In time the conversation took a grave turn, and Lebœuf related to his guest some of the particulars of the life of the Sardinian Salvi, which had come to the doctor's knowledge during the time of his attending the Italian. There is no need to repeat here the story of his disguises, his poverty, his struggles in eluding the terrible vigilance of the French police. The history of such a man would fill a volume in itself. But such histories have already been written, and the life of one outlaw is very much like that of another. The reader knows all that is necessary already. The man had sunk from degradation to degradation, and his last employment had been at least an honest one. He had been one of the numerous band of chiffonniers who pick a bare subsistence out of the offal of the Paris streets.

The dinner over, Trelane lost no time in revealing to his friend the new difficulty in which he now found himself placed, and the necessity under which he lay of asking the doctor to serve him in a new and not strictly speaking professional capacity. Our Englishman had not exaggerated the amount or the strength of the opposition which he would have to encounter on the doctor's part. The whole thing

appeared to the good physician to be madness and folly of the most grievous description. "What! risk a life on such a quarrel? It was worse than folly; it was wickedness. As if, too, Trelane had not had enough of wounds lately. Here he was, hardly recovered of those for which Lebœuf had attended him, and now he was going the way to receive more. Was there no way out of it? Might not he (Lebœuf) be entrusted with permission to make overtures of peace and settle this wretched affair in a different way? He would do anything, encounter any trouble, and not mind it a bit."

But to all this reasoning and argument, sensible as it seemed, the Englishman returned but one answer. The thing had gone too far to admit of a pacific solution. It was impossible for him to recede. The doctor could, of course, decline to act in the matter—indeed, it was most rational that he should do so—and Trelane would think none the worse of him if he did do so. But still the quarrel must go on to its legitimate termination, and it would then be necessary for Trelane to seek some other friend, or do without one, as the case might be.

Of this, however, the good old man would not hear. No; if this madness was to be carried out, at any rate he would be there to see fair play. He would stick by his patient and look after his rights. It was all opposed to his wishes and his opinions. It might be a case of obliquity in the mental vision on

his part, but he acknowledged that for the life of him he was not able to see how the laws of honour were carried out by people cutting each other's throats. Still, as he had said before, if the thing was to be, and this meeting was inevitable, Trelane need not, for one moment, imagine that his old physician would allow him to go to it alone, or with a stranger who might neglect to look after his interests.

And so it was arranged after much more fruitless argument, that, in the event of an emissary from d'Elmar waiting on Trelane, he was to be sent on, without delay, to Doctor Lebœuf.

"And now," said the doctor, "with regard to our arrangements for watching by the bedside of that dying man. You really wish to have some share in the watch?"

"I do, most earnestly," answered Trelane.

"Very well, then; Monsieur Morlot relieves the porter, Charvet, immediately; you shall succeed him at eleven; and I, in turn, will relieve you at two in the morning."

It was useless to expostulate with the doctor on his thus inflicting the most onerous part of the undertaking upon himself, so Trelane was obliged to give it up, and having to return to the Rue Pompadour, to wait for the visitor whom he expected, he took his leave of the doctor for the present, and went on his way, along the deserted streets of Versailles, to his apartments.

Dreary enough those apartments looked when Trelane reached them. The personal effects of Madame d'Elmar had been removed, and only the furniture and ornaments which belonged to the house, and went with the rooms, remained. Of course many of the objects which used to give a charm to the place were gone; all sorts of knick-knacks and toys that gave a habitable look to the lodgings had disappeared, and so also had the picture—*the* picture—which used to hang over the fireplace. Madame Charvet produced two very faintly glimmering candles, and, after placing them on the table, left our Englishman to his reflections.

Before all of us, if we could see into futurity, are moments, or hours, of such dulness and gloom as this which our Englishman had to endure. At country inns, to which we have gone against our inclination, and, perhaps, on business of an unattractive or positively disagreeable nature, we have all become acquainted with that large uninhabitable-looking room, and those two tall and dimly burning candles.

Trelane was excessively fatigued, and when he had sat for a short time reflecting on all the unpleasant things connected with his present situation, he soon began to lose his consciousness, and was not long in falling into a heavy sleep.

He had been in this happy state of unconsciousness for about half-an-hour, and had fallen into an agree-

able dream of being in a jungle in India, bound hand and foot, and with two glaring eye-balls, belonging to the body of a concealed tiger, blazing upon him, while his friends were firing off rifle balls which might hit him or the tiger, as the case might be. He was suddenly awakened by the consciousness—nothing more—that there was some living being in the room with him; and waking up with a sudden start, almost thought his dream was a reality, when he found a pair of eyes, somewhat of a tigerish kind, really glaring at him from the other side of the fireplace.

"I hope I have not disturbed you," remarked Lieutenant Tronchet, who was the proprietor of the eyes in question. "The porter told me you were here, and so I came straight upstairs. I knocked more than once at the door, but as you gave no reply, I thought it better to enter."

Trelane, still only imperfectly awakened, made no answer.

"You know," swaggered the lieutenant, with an odious grin, "I used to be pretty well acquainted with these apartments, so I had not much difficulty in finding my way."

Trelane woke up at this, in a moment.

"You have called upon me, I believe," he said, "on the part of Monsieur le Capitaine d'Elmar."

"I am, in fact, the emissary of that officer," was the lieutenant's reply.

"Your business?"

"Is, I am unhappy to state, of anything but an agreeable nature. I have to request that you will favour me with the name of some friend of yours, with whom I may arrange the particulars of the meeting between yourself and the captain, which has now become inevitable."

"I will do so without delay," replied Trelane, and he reached to him the inkstand, in order to write down the name and address of Dr. Lebœuf.

"Is your friend in the military profession?" asked the lieutenant.

"No, he is not," was the reply.

"Hum, a civilian—we shall probably have to enlighten him a good deal as to the laws regulating these kind of affairs."

"Here is the address," said Trelane, taking no notice of this last remark, and rising to intimate that the interview was at an end.

Trelane saw his guest to the door, which he opened for him with his own hands; and when he had closed it after him, he returned once more to his seat; but he had no inclination to slumber now.

He drew the inkstand to him again, and was soon deeply engaged in covering sheet after sheet of paper with writing.

The scene between the Lieutenant Tronchet and Dr. Lebœuf was, as is the case with many serious

things, not wanting in the comic element. From the moment when those two set eyes on each other, a mutual antipathy took possession of both. The doctor, confining himself to the moral nature of his visitor, instantly took a violent dislike to him, because of his personal appearance; while the other looked upon himself as an injured man, in having been referred to a person evidently so little versed in the conduct of such affairs as they had now met to discuss. Here, however, the worthy lieutenant had reckoned without his host. The doctor was a man of mysteries. At one time he had been in practice in the capital, and had been called upon in more than one instance, to be present, in his professional capacity, at meetings of a hostile nature. Besides, he had begun life as an army surgeon, and had, at that time, been mixed up in many adventures of this sort. It is only doing him the commonest justice, however, to add, that in all cases he had sought to act as a peace-maker; being equally anxious to prevent the inflicting of wounds, and to cure them when they were inflicted.

"Good evening, sir," said Dr. Lebœuf, wheeling round in his study chair, and motioning his visitor to a seat. After that he waited for the other to begin.

"I have been referred to you," the lieutenant commenced, rather awkwardly, "by an English gentleman, Monsieur le Major Trelane."

Here Monsieur Tronchet paused, expecting a little help.

"I believe he is a friend of yours," he continued presently.

The doctor only bowed, and the lieutenant began again, with a feeble attempt at a patronizing tone.

"I presume you have not had much experience in matters of this sort?"

"Matters of what sort?" asked the doctor, who was disposed to give no help.

"I mean that I conclude that meetings of a hostile nature are rather out of your line—more in my way, you know," added the lieutenant.

"Not at all," said the doctor, uncompromisingly. "I don't see that you've any ground for arriving at that conclusion—no ground at all."

This was rather a discouraging beginning. The lieutenant seemed indisposed to make a fresh start, so, after a pause, the doctor began to feel his way a little.

"And now, since you seem to know so much more about it than I do, Monsieur le Lieutenant, perhaps you'll allow me to ask whether you have fulfilled the very first duty which devolves on a gentleman who undertakes the office of 'second'?"

"And what may that duty be?" inquired the other.

"To endeavour with all your strength, and with every argument you can summon to your aid,

to avert this 'meeting,' as you call it, altogether?"

"Mon Dieu, monsieur—certainly not!" answered the lieutenant, indignantly.

"Then, young gentleman, I must tell you that I think, with all your experience, I know more about the duties of a second, not to speak of those of an honest man, than you do."

"I must take the liberty of differing from you there, Monsieur le Médecin; my client has received a challenge, not given one."

The doctor groaned at this, internally, for he felt that it was the weak point of the case. True that the words Trelane had spoken were literally forced out of his mouth by his antagonist. Still he *had* spoken them.

"It remains, then," continued Monsieur Tronchet, "since this meeting is inevitable, to arrange the preliminaries. When is it to take place? Will to-morrow morning do?"

"No," replied the doctor. "I have a dying man upon my hands, and I must see him out of the world first. Poor fools! as if disease did not kill people fast enough, without their putting an end to each other."

"Then perhaps the day after to-morrow would suit you better?"

"Ay," groaned the doctor, "that will do."

"I presume," continued the lieutenant, "that since

you have had so much experience in affairs of this kind——"

"Don't presume anything, sir, if you please," said the doctor grumpily. "Who said I had had so much experience of this sort?"

"Well! you told me just now, not to conclude that you were ignorant of such matters."

"Yes, I did. You've no grounds for presuming or concluding anything about it, either one way or the other. Never mind me, my experience, or my inexperience, but stick to the matter in hand. I suppose you were going to assert the right of your client to the choice of weapons?"

"As the challenged side, it belongs to us, of course."

"Well, which do you think is the most likely to prove murderous to this solitary Englishman, whom you've got into your clutches?"

"Sir, this is not the sort of language——"

"Oh, you can't do anything with an old fellow like me, so you needn't look so fierce. I'm not a fighting man. Come, which is it to be, swords or pistols?"

"My friend has decided," replied Monsieur Tronchet, with an assumed dignity which sat but ill upon him, "to conduct the affair with swords."

"Ah, I expected as much," groaned the doctor. "What else is there to arrange?"

"The time only, and the place," replied the lieutenant.

"I can't go far from my patients, mind."

"Very well, then, as we must leave Paris, we may as well travel in this direction as in any other," was the lieutenant's reply. "There is a very retired spot," he continued, "here, about half a mile to the northward of the Petit Trianon—will that suit you?"

"Ah," grumbled the physician, "that will do."

"For the time, it must be rather late in the day," continued Monsieur Tronchet.

"And why that? It is more convenient to arrange such matters early."

"My client," the officer went on, "is in bad health. He has been liable to fits lately, and was seized with a vertigo only a short time since, after that interview with your friend, the Englishman. Indeed, if my friend had listened to me, he would have put this affair off for the present."

"Much better, much better," the doctor put in.

"No, he will not hear of that. But, at least, I wish to make the thing as easy for him as possible. The days are short now—shall we say four o'clock in the afternoon?"

"Four o'clock be it," said the doctor, resignedly. "But if your friend listens to my advice as a medical man, he will put the affair off, *sine die*."

Lieutenant Tronchet rose to depart, as if at once to put an end to any hope that might linger in the doctor's mind that his advice would be taken.

"I hope we may have a fine day," he said, preparing to depart. "There are trees about our place of rendezvous, which drip in wet weather in a manner that is depressing in the extreme. Besides, we seconds shall have but cold work of it standing still. By-the-by, I recommend you to come well wrapped up."

"Young gentleman, young gentleman," said the doctor, gravely, "let me recommend you not to adopt that tone of levity in speaking of what may be very serious for all of us. I am an old man, and you are a young one, and I can tell you what you'll find out for yourself one day, that we've quite troubles and sufferings and pains enough to undergo in this world without going out of our way to inflict them on one another. There, sir, I wish you a good-night, and more wisdom as you get older."

Monsieur le Lieutenant Tronchet made a sort of attempt at a chuckling laugh as he took his departure. But it must be owned that it was an utter and unmitigated failure.

CHAPTER X.

AN EXIT.

Doctor Lebœuf only waited till his late guest might be supposed to be well clear of the neighbourhood, and then betook himself with all speed to the Rue Pompadour, and to Trelane's apartments.

Our Englishman looked up from his papers, for he was still occupied in writing, and greeted his visitor with a cordial smile.

The doctor was in a great state of fuss and agitation.

"Answer me one question," he cried, "and that immediately. Can you fence?"

"Oho!" said the major. "That's what they're at, is it?"

"Yes, yes, but tell me, are you good at it?"

"Well, I believe I am," answered Trelane.

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated the doctor. "It is much neglected in England generally."

"Up to the time when I was in the Crimea," said Trelane, "I knew but little of the use of the

sword. But afterwards, when in India, I made a study of it. In that hot climate, strange as it appears, it is necessary to take a great deal of violent exercise, and those who fail to do so generally suffer for it. I found this out by experience, and I used to fence in the school every day of my life."

"Heaven be praised!" said the doctor again. "We'll settle them yet."

"I see now," continued the major, "why d'Elmar contrived to make me first speak the words that might be construed into a challenge."

There was a short pause at this time, and then Trelane, speaking in that careless tone which Englishmen are magnificently fond of assuming when talking about things of a serious kind, said,—

"By-the-by, doctor, as we are upon this subject, you know there is a possibility that, in spite of all my practice in India, this countryman of yours may manage to let the daylight into me, and if so there will be more trouble in store for you——"

"Nonsense, nonsense! what do you mean?"

"Well, you know, in the first place, if I only get a wound, you'll have to cure me again, as you did once before. If, however, Monsieur d'Elmar is able to carry out his intention of settling me altogether, I shall certainly be less troublesome, but you won't be let off entirely even then."

"Pooh, pooh, you won't be hurt, I've a presentiment."

"Still, there's nothing like providing for contingencies, and if I should happen to be disposed of, here are a couple of letters which I should like to have sent to their destinations with as little delay as possible. One of these, you see, I have directed home, and I have no doubt that, soon after its delivery, you will have to meet certain members of my family, who will apply to you by my suggestion for any information they may want, and whom you must endeavour to console as well as you can, for my abrupt departure out of the world. By-the-by, you'd better keep me above ground if you can, as there's a certain family vault in England where they will want to stow away what's left of me."

"Bah, bah!" cried the doctor, "all this is unnecessary. I'm much more afraid of your getting another cut across the face than anything else. For of *all* the bad patients——"

"As to this other letter," said Trelane, interrupting him, and he was grave enough now, "you see by this direction that it is for—for Madeleine. You must give it to her when opportunity serves. I suppose you have no more clue to finding her than I have?"

"None whatever," replied the physician. "I wish to heaven I had."

"One thing more, and there is an end of all this," Trelane went on. "In this letter which I have written to my own home, I have spoken of *her*. I have said who she is, and commended her to the care of my mother and sisters. You will say, and no words you can use will be too strong, how earnestly I had it at heart that this poor persecuted girl should inherit, from the different members of my family, the love which they bestowed upon me. There," cried Trelane, at the conclusion of this sentence, "there's the conventional business of the hero's trusted friend for you to execute. Now we must think of other matters. *En garde*," he cried, catching up an umbrella, and making some passes at his old friend. "Do you think that sort of thing will settle them, monsieur le médecin?"

"It would soon settle *me*," the doctor said, smiling.

At this moment, the clock upon the chimney-piece struck eleven.

"It is time for me to go to my post by the Sardinian's bed-side," said Trelane, and he was beginning to prepare for departure, when the sound of footsteps and voices was heard outside, and presently Madame Charvet came hurrying into the room.

"Ah!" she cried, "I thought Monsieur le Docteur was here. Sir, you are wanted immediately. Jacques Morlot, your servant, has just sent a mes-

senger in search of you; he is anxiously expecting you——"

"Where, woman, where?" asked the doctor, impatiently.

"Monsieur, at a house where some Italian or Sardinian, I think the messenger said, is lying dangerously ill."

"We will go together," said the physician, addressing Trelane, and they were presently in the street.

They hurried along in silence. It was now raining fast, and the empty streets of Versailles, so broad and spacious, adapted to so much traffic, and even seeming to require it, appeared more deserted than ever. The lamps, few and far between, flickered in their glass cases as if the wind and rain together must shortly put them out.

The doctor called at his house for certain things which he required, and then they went out from that temporary shelter into the storm again. They stopped no more till they arrived at their destination.

There were no idlers about now. It was not a night for gossips to assemble at their doors, even though the death of a neighbour, so exciting a theme for discussion, seemed imminent.

Among the things which Dr. Lebœuf had brought with him was a small covered lantern, and, by the aid of this, the two now groped their way up the

dark staircase of the house they were visiting, and found out the door, on the second landing-place, of which they were in search.

Jacques Morlot was seated on the bed, supporting the Sardinian in a sitting posture. The man had indicated more by signs than words, Morlot said, that if left in a recumbent position he should stifle. It was necessary, then, to prop him up in this manner, and even now his breath seemed to come with difficulty, and it was evident in a moment to Lebœuf's practised eye that his patient was sinking fast.

The Italian's eye was dim, and he took no notice of the fact that two persons had entered the room. The natural struggle between life and death was going on, but he seemed to have nothing to do with it. It was not that he was clinging to life, but rather that the organs of his body were resisting the Great Disorganiser; the machinery was running down, the candle burning fitfully.

Dr. Lebœuf administered a cordial, and the flame flickered up again for a time; intelligence came back into the vacant eye, and then it became fixed as before on the Englishman. Trelane came nearer, and, seating himself on the bed, took the hand of the dying convict.

There was no priest by that bed-side, but there was a good man there. With bowed head, and in tones the gravity of which was increased by their

contrast with his ordinary manner, the old physician spoke such words of comfort as he dared. In the deep silence of that chamber of death, those words sounded with a solemnity which cannot be conveyed. There was a long pause when the doctor ceased to speak. Then it seemed as if the dying man were trying to regain the use of language. Trelane bent over towards him, and listened for a sound.

In this man's nature there appeared to be just one sentiment. There was one person with whom he wished to stand well, if one may use the expression—one memory in which he desired to live.

"You will not forget," he whispered in Trelane's ear, so faintly as to be hardly audible, "only to hear her voice—to be spoken to by her—that I troubled her——"

Here the man became incapable even of such disjointed whispering as this. After a time, however, he spoke again.

"Find her, search after her—don't leave her helpless." Here he broke down once more.

"Promise!" he cried aloud, audibly to all.

"I do," said Trelane. "If I live I will help and protect her."

The man sank again into a state of apathy, and the Englishman even thought it was all over. He looked inquiringly towards the doctor, but this last knew better. "He is still alive," he whispered.

For a long time they all three — Trelane, the

doctor, and Morlot—remained watching the dying man in a silence that might be heard. Brought thus into the very presence of death—the death of one who had been the enemy of all his human brethren—our Englishman could not help feeling how impossible were any feelings of a vindictive kind towards one thus near his end. And then he thought of that miserable and trivial quarrel in which he was at that very time involved. His opponent in that strife might by his hand be brought to this—might by his hand be laid on such a bed of death—might only thirty hours hence be drawing his last breath, and brought to that extremity by a man who had once held his hand in friendship. I believe that it was at that very moment that Trelane determined that the conflict which was to take place so soon should be conducted, as far as he was concerned, on the defensive only.

Once more the light flickered up before it expired. The Italian feebly lifted his heavy head, and once more seemed about to speak. Trelane bent forward again and listened, but for some time he could catch nothing. At last the man made one supreme effort, and formed intelligibly these last words:—

"YOU HAVE PROMISED."

They *were* his last words. From that time the lethargy gained upon him, the intervals between each breath were longer, the pulsations over which the

physician kept watch fainter and farther between. It was difficult to say when these ceased altogether, but at last the doctor signed to Morlot to lay his burden softly back upon the pillow, and Trelane bent over and lightly pressed his hands upon the dead man's eyelids.

The three who survived remained some time watching together by the corpse, and then the physician rose, and, fetching from the chimney-piece a poor scrap of broken looking-glass that stood there, held it close over the pale and parted lips. No dulness —no, not the faintest—marred the surface of the glass.

The doctor moved to the door of the room, and signed to his servant and to the Englishman to follow him. Morlot locked the door and took the key away with him, and soon they all stood outside in the street. The storm was over now, and the moon, obscured only occasionally by the thinnest of clouds that passed across it, shone brightly down upon the wet and glittering ground.

No word was spoken as Trelane and his friend, followed at a little distance by Jacques Morlot, went on their way. At Lebœuf's door they separated, and the Englishman went home alone.

As Trelane lay down that night upon his bed, he spoke once more those three memorable words:—

"I HAVE PROMISED."

He seemed to find a sort of comfort in them, and shortly fell into a profound and refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

A HOSTILE MEETING.

ONCE again we change the scene and find ourselves in the fortress of Vincennes, and in the quarters of Monsieur le Capitaine d'Elmar.

This gentleman's sitting-room is an untidy, and, if the truth must be owned, a somewhat dirty-looking apartment. Articles of dress, military equipments, and weapons, lie about in all directions; the walls are decorated with trophies of various kinds taken from the Arabs, and Algerian draperies, burnooses, and skins of wild beasts are spread over the different pieces of furniture; and some of these last, the skins namely, are laid upon the floor to fulfil the function of carpets. Monsieur d'Elmar is careful of his money, and slow to part with it, so he makes his military spoils do duty in the place of more expensive articles of upholstery. Even those few prints of military subjects, after Victor Adam, which hang upon the walls, were taken in part payment of a bad debt, and did not involve the laying out of money, a proceeding from which the true Frenchman shrinks aghast.

Upon a couple of chairs lie some fencing foils, with their accompanying masks and padded doublets. These things appear to have been flung down carelessly, as if recently used.

The time is one o'clock of the afternoon, and on a table in the middle of the room are the *débris* of a recent meal. There are the remains (very small) of a fricandeau of veal surrounded with sorrel, some fragments of an omelette aux fines herbes, a goodish remnant of Gruyère cheese, the beaks and claws of certain very small birds, probably sparrows, some husks of crawfish, one-fourth of a Bologna sausage, a pear and a half, and a dish of sponge-cakes. There are, besides these dainties, a couple of wine bottles, one of which is empty, while the other still contains about two drachms (apothecary's measure) of red wine; and there is a brandy bottle, and in the bottom of two coffee cups may be detected the black sediment of the *café noir* which recently filled them. In fact the table is covered with the remains of a French breakfast. The rolls and the fried potatoes are matters of course, and consequently have not been mentioned here.

Two gentlemen, both dressed in military costume, were in the room, occupying, respectively, a sofa and a fauteuil, and were engaged to the best of their abilities in digesting the meal, the fragments of which were on the table before them. One of these was the owner of the apartment, le Capitaine d'Elmar,

and the other, his friend—and ours—the fascinating Lieutenant Tronchet. Both gentlemen were considerably flushed by their recent exertions at the breakfast-table; but the countenance of the captain was of a darker hue than that of the inferior officer. It was natural that two such choice spirits should not waste moments which might be devoted to social intercourse and mutual improvement, and accordingly they were, at the time when we thus discover them to the reader, engaged in conversation. The lieutenant appeared to be in the best spirits and took the liveliest share in the talk. His companion had the appearance of being moody and preoccupied.

"I am convinced," said Monsieur Tronchet, who was enjoying the mild flavour of a paper cigarette to the utmost—"I am convinced that you have committed an error in partaking of such a heavy breakfast, under the circumstances. If you had taken my advice you would have confined yourself to a roll, one of those small birds, and a cup of coffee."

"Pooh!" said the captain. "I never felt stronger in my life."

"Ah, but that's not the question," argued the other. "Feeling strong is not a good sign with you. You ought to feel weak. Remember what the regimental surgeon told you only yesterday about living low and taking exercise."

"Well, I'm sure we've had exercise enough lately, as those foils can testify."

"Yes, yes," continued the lieutenant; "but the one won't do without the other, and you have breakfasted like a hungry Zouave."

"I tell you," said the captain, "that a good breakfast, and a bottle of vieux Macon, and a glass of Cognac to top up with, give one nerve, and put one in cue for anything and everything. Why, you are as bad as the Englishman's second, who, you told me, advised me on account of my precious health to put off this encounter." At this both these gentlemen burst into a hearty laugh; after which exploit, the captain's countenance was of a darker hue than before, and his eyes were more bloodshot.

There was a short silence after this explosion of merriment, during which the lieutenant occupied himself in rolling up his cigarette, which had come undone.

"I can't think," he said, presently, "how it was that you managed to provoke that phlegmatic Englishman, so that the challenge should come from him and not from you."

"He is not phlegmatic *for* an Englishman," returned the other; "and I knew how to manage him; but the fact is, that it was a difficult matter to lure him on to it, and required all the skill of which I was possessed."

"I hate him," said the lieutenant, with evidence of considerable sincerity in his tone.

"He is not a bad infant," remarked the other;

"troublesome just now, but possessing qualities, nevertheless."

"Very likely," replied the lieutenant. "But I hate him. It is inconceivable," he continued, licking the side of his cigarette, "how a girl like Madeleine can have taken a fancy to this fellow, or, indeed, that any girl can like an Englishman at all. They have no fire, no passion, no wit, no sentiment, no romance, no fancy."

"Perhaps," said d'Elmar, "there are some young women who prefer such qualities as constancy, sincerity, courage, and generosity, to those you have named."

Now, Monsieur Tronchet was a bit of a sneak, and was consequently a great stickler on the subject of personal bravery.

"Courage!" he cried, disdainfully. "Pooh! a nation without martial ardour! a race insensible to military glory! A fig for their courage!"

"I have seen them in the field, my buck," replied the captain, "which you haven't, and somehow or other they manage to fight."

"Well, he shan't have the girl, at any rate," urged Tronchet. "You stick by me in that."

"You must look after that yourself," answered d'Elmar, "and not leave it all to me. If anything breaks down in this present affair, I shall wash my hands of it. The thing's more trouble than it's worth."

"What, and let go the share in her dower which I promised you!" shrieked the lieutenant.

"It's my opinion that you'll find some difficulties in the way of coming at that dower, Monsieur Tronchet. The aunt is weak and pliable enough; but the girl was always obstinate, and now, since this infernal Englishman has turned up, she is worse than ever. At all events, I tell you fairly, this is my last move in the matter, and if it fails you must look out for yourself." And the captain rose and began to examine the exact condition of a pair of remarkably sharp small swords which stood in one corner of the room.

The lieutenant began to look a little blank and uneasy, and the next cigarette which he was endeavouring to roll up seemed to be more difficult to construct than such articles usually are.

"What's the use of talking about such a thing as failing?" he asked.

"Besides," continued Alexis, taking no notice of her friend's remark, still feeling along the blade of his sword, "you seem to forget that this is really a matter of more indifference to me than some people would imagine. You know the terms of my late brother's will, and that the property which he left to his niece goes away from her if she makes a marriage in opposition to my wishes, and in that case reverts to the residuary legatee."

"Ah, I know," grumbled Monsieur Tronchet.

"The residuary legatee being no other than your humble servant," continued Alexis, unmindful of the interruption; "so that you see I am safe any way; in fact, if this match with the Englishman were really to come off, I should prosper more than if my niece and her property were handed over to my best and dearest of friends, Lieutenant Tronchet."

"What's the use of your reminding me of all this," asked the gentleman just named, in a peevish tone of voice, "when you know that I have seen the will with my own eyes?"

"I remind you of it, Monsieur le Lieutenant, because you appear to forget it—because you seem to imagine that nothing but this match of yours will at all serve my interests. Whereas, if it did not happen that I am actuated by motives of friendship——"

"And, perhaps, a little by the consciousness of your being heavily in debt to me," interrupted the other.

"A debt," said d'Elmar, interrupting in his turn, "which it would be easy to pay out of the money which would come to me, should Madeleine make a match contrary to my wishes; so I repeat that, if I did not act under feelings of the warmest friendship, I should just suffer the thing to take its course, and not risk life and limb in a cause of this kind."

"Well, you can't recede now, at any rate?" remarked the lieutenant.

"No, I'm perfectly aware of that, Monsieur Tronchet; and, moreover, I've no wish to recede; but I

certainly do wish that you should be aware of what is being done in your service, and I also wish to say once more, that I am acting in this matter for the last time."

"One would think," said Monsieur Tronchet, with something approaching to a sneer, "that you were approaching this affair with a sense of mistrust. You know perfectly well that you are more than a match for this man."

"There is a certain amount of chance in all these matters," remarked the captain. He was making some passes with the weapon he had taken up, at an imaginary antagonist. "Hang it," he said, presently pausing to fetch his breath, which seemed rather to elude his grasp, "hang it, I don't see clear to-day. Bilious, I suppose. I'll have another petit verre," and before the lieutenant could stop him he had poured out and swallowed a good sized glass of the brandy which stood upon the table.

"What madness!" cried Tronchet, seizing upon the bottle, and thrusting it away into a closet. "In your state of health it is worse than madness, it is a crime."

"Not a bit," replied the other. "It's done me all the good in the world, settled my stomach, and steadied my nerves. I'm all right now."

The lieutenant appeared to be in a singularly disconcerted and gloomy state. He looked at his watch.

"It is almost time we were off," he said. "I suppose you are quite certain of your superiority to this Englishman in the use of the weapon?"

"Quite," replied the other, buckling on his accoutrements. "I have not a shadow of doubt about it."

"Have you ever tried with him?"

"Only once," replied the captain, "when we had nothing to do in the Crimea; but my superiority was so great, that we gave it up, as it was no match at all. He was always talking of improving himself in fencing, and of coming to me for some lessons, but he never did."

"I hope to heaven he may not have carried out his intention of improving himself since," ejaculated the lieutenant, piously.

"Not likely," replied his friend. "He is much too lazy. Come, we may as well be going now."

"Don't buckle yourself in so tight, d'Elmar," ejaculated his friend, as the captain took a good pull at the sword-belt. "It is so very bad for you after such a heavy breakfast. Two holes forwarder, I entreat."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied d'Elmar; "why, man, you are as careful of me as if your own security were bound up in mine."

"And so it is, so it is," urged the lieutenant; "if any injury were to come to you, I should feel as if I were the cause of it."

"Affectionate creature!" said the captain, in an ironical tone. "How delightful it is to be the object of so much regard!"

"I suppose," remarked Monsieur Tronchet, after a short pause, during which he had been engaged in adjusting one of the small swords in its place at his side, while d'Elmar armed himself with the other—"I suppose you have not overrated the amount of money left by your brother to his wife's niece?"

"There is no doubt about it at all," replied the other, "any more than there is of her aunt's personal property going to the girl as well."

"Peste! it is a noble spec, and a nice girl into the bargain," was the lieutenant's refined observation. "A third of it all is rather a large share for you to demand for the benefit of your good offices, my friend."

"Large or small, I must have it; my finances are in a bad way. But come, we've settled all that long ago, and there's no more to be said about it. We shall be late."

And with that the captain threw his loose military coat over his regimentals, and, Monsieur Tronchet following his example, the pair of worthies left the captain's quarters, and passed out of the fortress, the sentinels presenting arms to them as they went through the gates.

The two officers modestly seated themselves in an omnibus which was just starting for Paris, and,

arrived in the great city, lost no time in making for the terminus of the Versailles Railroad — Rive Gauche.

From time to time, d'Elmar continued to complain of a slight giddiness in his head, and of a want of clearness in his vision. In the railway train, though it was a cold day, he managed to sit with his face to the engine, and close to the open window, so that the cold air might blow upon him freely. Nothing could exceed the affectionate anxiety with which the amiable Monsieur Tronchet regarded all these indications of uneasiness in his friend. It was quite a beautiful display of disinterested regard, such as one does not often meet with in this world of egotism and self-interest.

The two friends arrived at Versailles at about a quarter to four, and being a little late they took a carriage and proceeded at a smart pace towards the place of rendezvous.

Among noble trees, and by pleasant paths and by-ways, they passed on, bent upon a miserable errand. Everything about them seemed made for the pleasure of man, and for his rational enjoyment and delight. It was horrible to think that his evil passions and his greed of gain should be able so to distort a man's mind as that he should see in these lovely and peaceful gardens only a secluded spot where he might be able to gratify his rage and fury with the least fear of interruption.

We in England have, at any rate, some cause for self-gratulation in reflecting that at least this murderous folly of duelling has passed into utter disuse among us.

On approaching the spot which had been originally indicated for the meeting, d'Elmar and his friend got out of the carriage, and, bidding the driver wait for them, went on on foot. They found that they were not the first arrivals. Two persons were awaiting them, who, on nearer inspection, turned out to be the Englishman, Major Trelane, and his friend the doctor. This last was entirely shrouded, from head to foot, in an enormous cloak, with an immense velvet collar, and an abundant supply of cords and tassels. That cloak might conceal anything; a case of surgical instruments and bandages, a box of duelling pistols, or even Monsieur Morlot's medicine-chest itself. This last-named gentleman, by-the-by, might be observed standing by himself at a respectful distance, observing everything that happened. He had been brought with the intention of being made generally useful. Certainly the even tenor of Monsieur Morlot's way had been considerably chequered with new incident, since first his destiny had become mixed up with that of the English major.

"Assistant at a duel now," he said to himself. "I wonder what next? a pirate, probably, or a rope-dancer."

The first comers were eagerly examined and scrutinized by d'Elmar and the lieutenant, as these last drew near to the place of rendezvous.

"Confound that Englishman!" remarked Monsieur Tronchet. "He's an active-looking animal. I hope he won't give us any trouble."

"Who's the old villain in the cloak?" asked d'Elmar. "I suppose he's the disinterested gentleman who thought it would be better for my health to stay at home for a week or two. And there's a third individual. Who the deuce may he be?"

"As far as I can make him out," replied Tronchet, "he is the man who let me in, when I went to the doctor's to make our arrangements. He's a queer figure of fun, isn't he?"

"But what does he do here?" asked the captain, testily. "His presence is irregular—highly irregular."

"I wish the whole trio were spitted through on one of these swords, like larks for roasting," was the amiable aspiration of Lieutenant Tronchet.

"I wish I could see a little plainer, and without cobwebs before my eyes," said d'Elmar in turn. "I feel as if I was treading on air."

"Suppose we put the thing off for a day," suggested the lieutenant.

"Not a bit of it. It is now or never with me. I've made up my mind."

Lieutenant Tronchet remarked, that it was all the

fricandeau à l'oseille and the brandy. Then he left his friend's side, who remained standing at a little distance from the hostile group, and went across to confer with Dr. Lebœuf.

Meantime, while the remarks just quoted were being exchanged by Messieurs d'Elmar and Tronchet, these gentlemen were not unobserved by the little group which first occupied the field. When first the captain and his second appeared in the distance, Trelane and the doctor were talking of that death-bed of the Italian by which they had both stood so recently. They spoke of the man's strange character and sad end—of that single desire which seemed to have possessed him to have his memory in some sort set right with his daughter—and of his wish, so earnestly expressed, to be buried where she sometimes went, so that at least her footsteps might fall near to the place where he lay. While they talked thus, they presently became aware that d'Elmar and his friend were approaching; and so the conversation stopped, and the doctor went aside and conversed for a moment with his familiar spirit, Monsieur Jacques Morlot.

"You see those two officers," he said. "The shorter and stouter of the two is the principal on the other side."

Monsieur Morlot uttered a sound indicative of assent.

"His friend," the doctor continued, "tells me

that he has lately been subject to fits or attacks of vertigo."

"The fact is," replied the familiar, "that he looks rather queer. There is a strange sort of gray, or almost black colour about his countenance."

"That's what I wanted to know," said the physician. "I thought, perhaps, it was my fancy. Now, mind, it must be your business to keep your eyes continually fixed upon his face, and if you see any symptoms of one of those fits coming on, you must give the alarm at once. I might be occupied with other matters at the moment."

Monsieur Morlot undertook to keep his eyes wide open, and the doctor went forward, with considerable dignity in his manner, to meet the lieutenant, who was waiting for him.

The lieutenant took off his cap, and made a profound bow. The doctor followed his example, and both gentlemen remained bare-headed, till the elder signed to the younger to be covered, setting him the example immediately afterwards by putting his hat on. A salute of a distant kind took place also between le Capitaine d'Elmar and Major Trelane, who remained some distance asunder. The conference between Lebœuf and the lieutenant was a brief one.

"May I ask," the latter began, "before we go farther, who that third individual may be, and to what his presence on this occasion may be attributed?"

"He is my servant and assistant," the doctor replied.

"Are you aware that his presence at such a time is somewhat irregular?" asked the lieutenant.

"It may be so. But at the same time it may be very useful."

"In what way, if I may be allowed the question?"

"Monsieur," replied the doctor, gravely, "there are contingencies which may arise in connection with an affair of this sort. It may be necessary to fetch a vehicle suddenly, or some one may be wanted to assist in carrying."

"Ah! just so," interrupted the lieutenant, turning rather green; "perhaps the irregularity may, under the circumstances, be excused."

The doctor bowed ceremoniously.

Trelane and d'Elmar were waiting impatiently for the termination of this colloquy. The Frenchman had thrown himself down upon the grass, rather a damp resting-place at such a time of year. Trelane was leaning against a tree, and all sorts of strange and incongruous imaginings were passing through his head. Noble thoughts and paltry thoughts, big and little thoughts, things trivial and things immeasurably important, both as to this world and the next, were chasing each other confusedly through his mind in a wondrous medley dance—a dance of death it might be, for aught he knew. Now he was thinking of his home in England and of those he

had left there, and picturing to himself what would be their sensations if, at that moment, they could know exactly how he was situated. The pretty English drawing-room, with his old mother and his sisters engaged in their various occupations, rose up before his eyes; and the old Cuban blood-hound on the rug, which would have yonder Frenchman by the throat before even swords were crossed, if the devoted beast only had the chance. Then our hero thought of a certain small bill, owing to a Paris tradesman, which he had forgotten to pay, and with this memory came a vision of some striped socks, items in that same bill, and Trelane wondered what would become of them, and who would wear them, *if anything happened to him.* And then he thought, would this be a good way to die? With a career before him, with the possibility of being useful in his generation, of making other people, and one especially, happy! Had he a right, then, to risk his life? He hoped the sin of so risking that precious possession, a life, might be forgiven him, and he resolved that this, once over, he would never, under any provocation, use sword or pistol in other than a public cause again. And then he thought of Madeleine, and of his promise to find and protect her; and it must be owned that the wish to live, the wish to pass through this affair unscathed, was strong, very strong, within him. "I wish they would let us begin," he thought to himself.

Monsieur d'Elmar's thoughts were of a dif-

ferent complexion. "I have no wish," he said to himself, "to kill this troublesome individual, who has had the misfortune to come in my way, nor will I, if I can conveniently help it. But I must have this money; and to get it, and give this Tronchet here a chance with the girl, I must so manage that this Englishman shall be hors de combat for some time at any rate. I fancy I am master enough of fencing to be able, with such an ignoramus as this, to do exactly what I like, and so I shall endeavour to give him a wound which will lay him up for a considerable time without finally disposing of him. I wish, however," thought d'Elmar, "that I felt in better cue, and that this infernal giddiness and difficulty of seeing would take themselves off. I really can neither think clearly nor see clearly." And he unconsciously echoed Trelane's wish that the seconds "would let them begin."

These two important functionaries were just concluding the final preliminaries.

"With regard to weapons?" asked Monsieur Tronchet.

"Monsieur le Major," the doctor replied, "travelling with his regimentals, has the sword which belongs to them with him. Here it is," he continued, producing one from under the voluminous cloak.

Tronchet tried it with that which he wore, and which, it will be remembered, was the counterpart of

the weapon which d'Elmar had by his side. The Englishman's sword was too long.

"I have here a sword," suggested the lieutenant, "which is the very same as that worn by my friend. Would it not be better to use those two? Your client may choose which he likes."

Lebœuf went aside to confer with his principal on this matter, and shortly returned with his full assent to the lieutenant's proposal.

Nothing now remained unsettled, but it having been suggested that a more retired place than this where they were assembled might be found, the whole party moved further into the wood, and came presently to a little secluded spot, where they were completely hemmed in and concealed by the trees and underwood, which grew more thickly here than in any part of the chase. There was little enough chance of interruption here, at any rate.

"Gentlemen," said Lieutenant Tronchet, "the preliminaries are arranged."

D'Elmar threw off his loose paletôt, and proceeded to unfasten his military frock. Trelane began to follow his example.

"Messieurs," said the doctor, stepping between them, "before this folly and wickedness proceeds further, suffer me to speak just one word. You are about to do what no man has a right to do—to risk your lives without an adequate reason. You are virtually reviving the habits of a by-gone age;

for though these kind of conflicts are not entirely done away with in this country, they are comparatively falling into desuetude, and if we think of the extent to which this practice was once carried, and compare the present day with a time only a hundred years distant, we may almost say that duelling is already obsolete. The age is getting past so barbarous a custom; and in one country far behind us in most things—I mean the country to which this gentleman belongs — the duello is abolished altogether, and he who talked of such a thing seriously would simply be laughed at. Gentlemen, I entreat you, before it is too late, to give this madness up. Differ, if you must. Part from each other, if you must, as those between whom friendship has become no longer possible. To gain such objects as you may separately have in view, use such means as are legitimate, and let him win in whose hands those legitimate means prosper the most. What would you lose by such a change, made even now at the eleventh hour? Would any imputation lie on your courage? Each of you knows of what materials the other is made, for each of you has seen the other face to face with all the horrors of war. Gentlemen, —gentlemen, you have fought side by side, made common cause together; you have, as I understand, even been together as boys in the play-ground and as men in the camp. Don't turn your sword-points against each other now, for God's sake! Come,

come, you have occupations of importance to attend to, a thousand sources of pleasure and enjoyment at your disposal. It is a pleasure to breathe this air, to tread this turf, to look round you on those trees, and up to the sky above. I tell you, gentlemen, that the very elements and inanimate things reprove you for coming to this place with such an object as you have, and add their testimony to mine against this wicked act."

The good old boy paused, and muttered some apology for having troubled them with so long a discourse, and then there was a moment's silence. Certainly there was one who listened to these words on whom they made a deep impression, but the Englishman was ashamed to say so, and remained silent. Perhaps at that moment the issue of this quarrel trembled in the balance—peace in the one scale, war in the other. If it was so, the indicator did not oscillate long, for Lieutenant Tronchet cast his heavy person into the war scale, and the other went up in a moment and kicked against the beam.

"This is all very well," he said, "but we are losing time, and you, Monsieur le Médecin, are throwing away your eloquence. We came here not to decide whether a duel should take place, but simply to fight one."

"Beati pacifici," groaned the doctor, "you are little better than a murderer, Monsieur le Lieutenant."

"You presume upon your age, Monsieur le

Médecin, and you do so safely. Gentlemen," continued the lieutenant, addressing the two principals, "are you ready?"

They were both prepared in a moment. Trelane selected his weapon at random, and the two men stood out alone together, with such articles of clothing removed as might have impeded their free action.

Once more the doctor interposed.

"I have just one word more to say, literally one word. As a medical man, it is my duty to tell that gentleman," pointing to le Capitaine d'Elmar, "that he is totally unfit for this undertaking."

"How unfit?" cried d'Elmar.

"Unfit from ill-health," was the doctor's reply.

"Bah!" sneered the captain, with a loud laugh, "it will do me good. Mettez-vous en garde, monsieur," he cried immediately afterwards, and the swords were crossed in a moment.

"I've discharged my duty, at any rate," said the good doctor, as he stood on one side. "I can do no more."

Nothing could exceed the supreme and breathless interest of such a moment as this. The short sawing sound caused by the occasional friction of the swords against each other—a sound so different from the methodical clashing of the stage combat—was the only sound, except the singing of a winter thrush, which now broke the deep silence. There was no fear of the doctor's admonitions breaking out

any more, for he knew that a word might divert the attention of the combatants, and lead to the worst consequences to one or the other of them. So the silence was unbroken, except, as has been said, by the sliding of the blades against each other.

The extremest caution was displayed by both the combatants. Both seemed resolved to run no risk, and such passes as were made were short, and ventured, rather as experiments tried with a view of feeling the way than anything else. One thing might have been observed by any by-stander who should have had eyes for anything but those two quivering blades, and this was a certain air of consternation and surprise which sat upon the countenance of Lieutenant Tronchet, and which was developed by nothing less than the remarkable address of Trelane in the use of his weapon. Taken in connection with what the lieutenant had heard from his friend of the Englishman's ignorance of fencing, there was something about this skilfulness of the major's, which was positively astounding. A good swordsman himself, Tronchet had not watched this conflict for ten seconds, before he had observed that his friend d'Elmar had met his match. His wonder and dismay were about equally balanced as this discovery dawned upon him; but what was the extremity of both these feelings when, after the contest had lasted for about two minutes, he saw his friend's weapon fly into the air, and then fall,

point downwards, to the ground, into which it struck to some depth, the handle quivering with its own weight. D'Elmar was disarmed.

"Enough now, at any rate," the doctor burst in, with an air of relief; "even your code of honour is satisfied."

"No, no!" screamed d'Elmar, fearfully excited, and hardly able to breathe; "not enough. It was a chance—it *must* have been a chance."

Trelane was silent. He was ashamed to speak, and say that he thought this "chance," as d'Elmar called it, should terminate the engagement.

"I tell you," cried the doctor, "that this *is* enough; that to go on with this encounter, after what has happened, would be worse than madness. I am one of the seconds, and I protest against it."

"And I, as another of the seconds, beg to differ from you altogether."

At these words of Lieutenant Tronchet's, the poor doctor looked really aghast. He seemed hardly able to believe that such venom and wickedness could exist in a human being.

"When one of the principals desires to go on," the lieutenant continued, "and especially if he is, for the moment, in the worst predicament, it is as great an act of cowardice to baulk him as for the winner at a game of chance to refuse his adversary his revenge."

"Give it me, my revenge!" shrieked d'Elmar. His fury and excitement were absolutely terrible to

behold. He could not bear the disgrace of being disarmed, and by one whose skill he had so entirely despised.

"Are you afraid," he cried to Trelane, "that you stand there inactive, with your sword pointed downwards?"

"Take your weapon, sir," answered the Englishman, coldly, and pointing to the still quivering sword. The Frenchman plucked it out of the ground, and the fight began once more.

Again the blades sawed and quivered one upon the other, but now with a sharper and quicker movement. The passes made by d'Elmar were more eager and furious than before, and it soon became evident to the by-standers that he was losing his head, and that his own frenzy was constantly bringing him into the utmost peril, and placing him continually at his adversary's mercy. The renewed struggle had been going on for some three or four minutes, and d'Elmar's fencing had been getting more and more wild and desperate, when an exclamation uttered by Monsieur Morlot, who had all this time, in obedience to his master's orders, kept his eyes riveted on d'Elmar's countenance, once more brought the conflict to a stand-still. Trelane stepped quickly back, and this time his adversary made no attempt to press upon him.

"Look," cried Jacques Morlot, pointing to d'Elmar, "he is no longer capable of defending himself."

The attention of all was now directed to the captain. Standing where he was, altogether out of reach of his antagonist, he was still making feeble attempts to use his weapon, faintly cutting and thrusting at the air, but moving more languidly and with greater difficulty every moment. A great change had passed over his face, which Morlot had been the first to remark; his eyes were half closed, and a strange moisture was gathering about his lips. And now it seemed with difficulty that he maintained an erect position at all; he staggered feebly about, and would have fallen, had not Doctor Lebœuf gone hastily to his rescue. The physician was assisted by Morlot, and presently d'Elmar was softly laid down on the turf, but with his head and body supported from behind.

"He has fallen into a fit," said the doctor.

"It is only a passing vertigo, such as he has suffered from before," remarked the lieutenant; "he will be as much himself again as ever in a few minutes."

The doctor shook his head.

"Can you bleed him?" asked Tronchet, eagerly; "have you your lancet with you?"

"Most certainly I can bleed him, if you wish it," replied Lebœuf. "Indeed, with a subject of such full habit, and under the circumstances, I believe it would be the wisest course."

"Then do it, without loss of time, I beg," urged the lieutenant, and he began to pace up and down the

small arena in an impatient manner, pulling at his moustache, and glancing down, ever and anon, at his prostrate friend.

D'Elmar's coat had been removed before the duel commenced, so the preparations for bleeding him were made very expeditiously. The lancet was slipped into his arm, and, after a short delay, the blood began to flow. The doctor had been assisted in performing this operation by his attendant, Monsieur Morlot. Trelane had thrown down his sword, and now looked eagerly on. He was thankful, as he looked at the face of the man who had once been his friend, that the blood which was flowing was not shed by him. Lieutenant Tronchet kept up his monotonous patrol, now and then pausing to watch, in a nervous, fidgety manner, the proceedings of Dr. Lebœuf.

By-and-by, a change came over the countenance of d'Elmar. His features were less locked and rigid, and shortly, but by degrees, his eyes began to open, and he appeared to become conscious of surrounding objects. Presently he sat up unsupported, and looked wistfully from one to another of the faces round about him. His eyes rested on Trelane, and then he seemed to remember.

"What has happened?" he asked. "Have I been wounded?"

"No," answered his friend, "you have had one of your attacks of vertigo, that's all."

D'Elmar remained silent for a time. He seemed still much confused.

"But my arm," he said, looking down at it, "it is bandaged. What is the matter with it?"

"You have had a little blood let," the lieutenant answered, "nothing more."

"This duel is not over yet," said d'Elmar. "In a short time I shall be able to resume it."

Doctor Lebœuf smiled. It was a curious thing, under the circumstances. He had been grave enough hitherto, but he certainly smiled. And so did Jacques Morlot—after a grim fashion, however.

D'Elmar was sitting, looking, in a sort of dreamy, stupid manner, at his bandaged arm. Suddenly he started as a new thought entered his head.

"Ah!" he cried, turning fiercely on the doctor, "what have you done? It is my sword arm."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" cried Lebœuf, "what an extraordinary mistake to have made."

"Peste! what an oversight," remarked Monsieur Morlot.

"What is it? what is the matter?" cried Monsieur Tronchet, bustling forward.

"They have bled me in the sword arm," was his friend's answer.

"What do you mean by such infernal unskilfulness?" shrieked the lieutenant. "And you pretending to call yourself a physician!"

"Monsieur can call in some one else when he

is ill," interposed Jacques Morlot. "We have plenty of practice."

"Silence, Morlot," replied his master. "The right arm happened to be next me," he continued, addressing the lieutenant. "There was no time to be lost. In a few days the puncture will be healed entirely."

"'A few days!'" echoed Tronchet, savagely. "What, do you talk to me about 'a few days?' We want to fight now, and we will, too."

"Then," replied the doctor, "Monsieur le Capitaine will bleed to death before your eyes."

This announcement produced a considerable effect, and was succeeded by a pause of some length. As for d'Elmar himself, he seemed quite stupefied by this event, and took no part in the dispute. Trelane was also silent. He was thinking of the remarkable chances by which this duel had thus been twice arrested. What would be the end of it all?

It was Monsieur Tronchet who broke the silence again.

"I am inclined to think," he said, "that this mistake has not been altogether an affair of chance. It is one of those accidents which have been done on purpose."

The doctor made a very low bow.

"Just as you please, Monsieur le Lieutenant," he said; "just exactly as you please."

"You will find, however," continued the enraged

Tronchet, "that you have not quite done with us yet."

It was a curious thing, that all this time the lieutenant confined himself to quarrelling with the doctor, but never by word or even by look included the Englishman in any of his remarks.

"You have not heard the last of this," he said again, still addressing himself to the doctor, "depend upon it."

D'Elmar had hitherto remained silent. He now spoke again, but with a curious thickness in his voice. There was something confused, too, about his manner.

"Come," he said, taking his friend's arm, "come away. We are wasting time. It is useless to stay here longer."

"Right," answered the lieutenant, "quite right. Useless to stay longer *now*. But," he reiterated once again, and still addressing the doctor, "you have not heard the last of us, depend upon it."

It was remarkable that all these threats came now from the second. D'Elmar himself spoke no more, and as the two moved slowly from the ground, the captain's gait and movements were so unsteady, that Dr. Lebœuf directed Monsieur Morlot to follow at a little distance, in case more assistance than that afforded by the lieutenant should be necessary to get d'Elmar to the spot where the carriage was waiting for him. Then, by another route, Trelane

and his late second also took their departure, and soon that lonely place, which had been the theatre on which so strange a scene had been enacted, was as utterly deserted as is the mimic stage when the player has fretted his hour upon it and is gone.

The darkness was beginning to set in, and before Trelane and the doctor had got back to Versailles it was evening. And so this strange affair came to an end.

As to whether that mistake made by Dr. Lebœuf in bleeding his patient in the sword arm was really a mistake, or was, as Monsieur Tronchet suggested, an accident done on purpose, it is impossible to say. Certainly, all that an author can do under such circumstances is to give an opinion which must be taken for just what it is worth; and the opinion of the present writer—founded on the facts of the case, and especially on the remarkable circumstance that Dr. Lebœuf and his servant smiled when Monsieur d'Elmar talked of resuming the conflict—is that the worthy physician was determined from the first to avail himself of any fair means that came in his way of putting an end to what he considered an unjustifiable proceeding; and that having chanced upon one which his own profession peculiarly fitted him to use, he did use it, and with the best possible results. All this, however, is mere matter of opinion. The only certain thing that is known, and which may be

looked upon as throwing any light upon this question is, that when Dr. Lebœuf and our Englishman parted for the night, the physician was heard to say, with a curious twinkle in his eye as he spoke,—

"My dear friend, if ever you are involved again in an affair of this nature, which I trust, however, will never be the case, always take care to have a medical man for your second."

Trelane remained a day or two longer at Versailles, but no further tidings reached him either from d'Elmar or his friend. Indeed, the former was now in a state of health which rendered it necessary that for a time he should take the greatest care of himself, while as for the lieutenant, he was, as we have seen, in no way ambitious of taking up his friend's quarrel.

Our Englishman was now most anxious to be once more off upon his travels. It was true that in the pursuit in which he had pledged himself to engage, he had neither rudder nor compass, and was possessed of no such clue as had guided him before. But to set against this he had an encouragement within himself which he had hitherto wanted. He had now no doubt about Madeleine, no misgivings. He felt that he knew all. There was no rival for him to fear. The obstacle of which Miss d'Elmar had spoken as invincible, as one that must keep her and Trelane asunder in

this world, was now known to him, and he had resolved that it should be no obstacle at all. Where there is a will there is a way, and Trelane's will was in this case strong enough to make him feel confident that the way would reveal itself to him ere long.

CHAPTER XII.

KYRIE ELEISON.

MADELEINE D'ELMAR was not entirely miserable, for there is no entire misery without guilt; but her suffering on that night when Trelane left her at St. Amand was very great and poignant, nevertheless. She had hurried home after that hopeless parting, hardly conscious of what she did, and so entirely forgetful of Lieutenant Tronchet's presence that she really did not know that he was following her. Arrived at home, she found her aunt in some anxiety at her prolonged absence, and then she had still to control herself while she told her the sad story of what the evening had brought forth—a story told in her own bed-room, and with locked doors, so afraid was Madeleine of intrusion on the part of Monsieur Tronchet. With less success, the poor girl sought still to control herself while that letter which the reader has seen was written; but that done, and the faithful Victorine despatched with it, she broke down utterly, and fell into such an agony

of sorrow as it would not become us to intrude upon.

To escape from the place, and from Monsieur Tronchet at the same time, was Madeleine's next thought, and it was with this intention that that journey was undertaken which brought Miss d'Elmar and her aunt so suddenly to Paris, and the first into Dr. Lebœuf's study at Versailles. Of what took place in that room we have already taken cognizance.

During the time that the events of the next few days occupied, Madame d'Elmar and her niece remained hidden in Paris, their retreat not being known even to d'Elmar himself. Madeleine had prevailed on her aunt—not without much difficulty—to keep their whereabouts a secret from their relative for a time, at any rate, in order that they might be secure from the intrusion of his friend the lieutenant; and Madame d'Elmar had, perhaps, been persuaded to secresy more easily than would otherwise have been the case, in consequence of her own extreme aversion to that officer. Of a weak and timid disposition, this was almost the first time in her life that she had sought to emancipate herself from the influence of her brother-in-law, and she trembled accordingly. But her love for her niece was even greater than her dread of Alexis, and accordingly she consented to that sudden retreat from St. Amand which was accomplished—Madame d'Elmar having,

it will be remembered, a carriage and horses at her disposal—while the amiable Tronchet was snoring away at the little inn, dreaming of the progress he would make on the morrow in Madeleine's good graces, and while Trelane himself was tearing through the darkness as fast as his horse could carry him.

Madame d'Elmar had selected a small hotel in one of the out-of-way districts of Paris for her hiding-place, and it is in a little sitting-room in that hotel that we now find this lady and her niece. There are evidences about the room that these ladies are not likely to inhabit it much longer; some boxes are standing about ready packed, and others with their lids back are in a less advanced state. The two English ladies are engaged in conversation.

Now had we chanced—and the thing might perfectly well have happened—to enter this apartment in our invisible garments, only five minutes earlier, we should have learnt exactly what all these travelling preparations indicated, and in what direction these ladies designed to journey. But unfortunately, just as we entered, the servant, Victorine, entered too to proceed with the work of packing, and so the conversation, which had just before been all about the contemplated journey, came to an abrupt end, and another topic was started.

"Madeleine," said Madame d'Elmar, "there is one thing that it would be a great comfort to me

to have done before we go away; I am afraid, however, it is impossible."

"What is it, aunty?" asked Madeleine, looking quickly up.

She was engaged in wrapping up some of her aunt's medicine-bottles in soft handkerchiefs.

"The—the cemetery—" Madame d'Elmar stopped abruptly when she had uttered these two words, and did not explain herself further. Her niece, however, understood her.

It was part of the character of Madame d'Elmar to venerate strongly, and without inquiry. Her late husband had, as has been already stated, tyrannized over his wife's weak nature, leaving her no will of her own in anything, and keeping her in a great and continual subjection. But this gentle lady had loved him deeply and truly, and hugged the chains with which she was bound. And now that her tyrant had been taken from her she clung still to his memory. She thought only of such good qualities as he had possessed. The bad ones were altogether forgotten. In such cases as these an angelic goodness is developed in the woman herself; but the effect of such companionship upon the man is seldom satisfactory.

Poor Madame d'Elmar could not bear that any long time should elapse without a fresh tribute of affection and respect being placed upon the grave where lay the remains of him whom she had loved

the more for his stern bearing towards her. In her weak state of health it was not always possible for her to carry with her own hands the garland which showed that the memory of the dead man had not passed away, but she would allow herself to be represented by no other proxy than the niece whose blood was the same as her own, and towards whom, as it happened, the deceased gentleman had shown always a greater kindness and forbearance than he had ever exercised in dealing with his wife.

In an early chapter of this history we found Miss d'Elmar standing by that grave in the Belleville cemetery, having newly placed there the garland with which she had been entrusted. It now came into this young lady's mind that it was her duty to offer once again to visit that place which had for her associations at once miserable and delightful.

"I wonder," said Madame d'Elmar, "if I could get there before we go away? we do not leave till the evening."

"Impossible, dear aunty," interposed Miss d'Elmar. "You are already hardly strong enough to travel."

The young lady looked affectionately at her aunt as she spoke; and, indeed, Madame d'Elmar's appearance suggested a degree of weakness and delicacy such as it was almost painful to witness. This lady has been described from the first as weak and sickly, and as showing her ill-health in her face. But she was at this time sadly changed even from what she was

when we first saw her. Weaker and more transparent-looking, with that drawn look about the nostrils and the corners of the eyes which speaks so strongly of disease long-endured, advancing slowly, but with steps none the less certain for their seeming hesitation.

Madame d'Elmar sighed, and wore a disappointed look.

"I am afraid it *is* impossible," she said, after a moment's pause.

"Aunty, let *me* go," said Miss d'Elmar, hastily.

"You, my child!" said her aunt, in a tone of surprise; "you surely don't know what you are proposing!"

"Indeed, aunty, I do. I could go with Victorine. I feel—I don't know why—that I should not be afraid now."

Madame d'Elmar looked entirely puzzled. She wished, yet feared, to accept the girl's offer.

"Aunty, I *will* go," said Madeleine, smiling and getting up. "I wish it. I should like it. Victorine, you must get ready immediately."

The bonne abandoned her packing, and turning herself about, stood awaiting the final orders of Madame d'Elmar.

Miss d'Elmar had spoken the simple truth when she stated that she should *like* to execute her aunt's commission. That Belleville cemetery was now less associated in her mind with what had disturbed

and terrified her there than with the presence of Trelane. She felt as if it would be a real pleasure to her to see the place again, and all nervous apprehension in connection with it had, as she said, passed away from her mind. Madame d'Elmar made some sort of attempt to persuade her niece out of her intention, but the fact is, that the attempt was but a feeble one, and it was not long before the commissionnaire of the hotel was despatched in search of a carriage to convey the young lady and her bonne to Belleville.

"You will promise not to delay, my darling," said Madame d'Elmar, as she tenderly embraced the young lady at parting. "And let nothing induce you to separate yourself even for a moment from Victorine."

Madeleine gave the promise readily; and, closely veiled and followed by her servant, descended the hotel stairs and got into the carriage which was waiting at the door. But rapidly as this movement was executed, it was not unobserved by a gentleman in the uniform of a sub-lieutenant in the French army, who happened to be passing on the opposite side of the way, and who, in one instant recognizing the servant, was able in the next to conclude who the mistress must be. So Lieutenant Tronchet whisked himself round directly he had made his discovery, and became absorbed in a certain bon-bon shop opposite the hotel, in order that his own

intelligent countenance might not be recognized by the occupants of the carriage.

As soon, however, as the wheels of this vehicle had revolved a sufficient number of times to carry it round the corner of the next street, the gallant lieutenant turned himself about once again, and crossing over the road, entered the hotel from which the young lady and her servant had just issued, and inquired of the porter whether Madame d'Elmar was residing there, and whether she was at home.

The officer was shown up to Madame d'Elmar's apartments where he remained about half an hour, and when, at the expiration of that period, he again descended into the street, a smile of a rather villanous description hovered about the corner of his moustache. In that short time, Monsieur Tronchet had learned from Madame d'Elmar to what place she and her niece were about to remove, together with other matters of considerable interest to this valiant officer.

In the meantime, the carriage containing Miss d'Elmar and her maid proceeded slowly on its way, till at last it reached the steep ascent that leads to Belleville, and in due or rather *un*-due time, arrived at the cemetery gates. Madeleine provided herself with some flowers, and directing the driver of the carriage to wait for her, went into the garden of the dead.

It was the time of day when the funerals were

going on, and as Madeleine drew near to the part of the garden which she intended to visit, she observed that some persons were already gathered about the place, and that others in a little group, with a priest in canonicals at their head, were approaching. She saw at once that they were bringing a corpse for interment. Indeed, she had to pass the open, yawning grave on her way to that of the deceased Monsieur d'Elmar.

The priest, attired in very dirty vestments, was muttering the anthem, "In Paradisum," as the procession moved along, and then, as the bearers gathered about the grave, the benediction of that last resting-place was spoken, and both the grave itself and the corpse were sprinkled with holy-water.

Miss d'Elmar had been brought up by her aunt in the Protestant faith, but she had learned to show respect to the devotion of those who adhered to a less enlightened creed, so she stood quietly aside and listened. She had never seen the funeral service of the Roman Catholics performed, and it may have been with a feeling of curiosity, that having deposited her flowers on the tomb of her uncle, she drew near and watched the ceremony which was taking place close by it. The service went on in due course:—

"*Ego sum resurrectio et vita; qui credit in me, etiam si mortuus fuerit, vivet; et omnis qui vivit et credit in me, non morietur in æternum.*"

"*Kyrie eleison.*
"*Christe eleison.*
"*Kyrie eleison.*"

As she listened to the splendid words, Madeleine d'Elmar looked fearfully down into the grave, then at the priest, wondering he could do his office so carelessly; and then she saw in one moment that the face of one who stood near to the ecclesiastic was the face of Dr. Lebœuf. The doctor looked up at this moment, and their eyes met.

It would be difficult to say which of these two was the most astonished at the sight of the other. It seemed so wonderful that they should both have reached this spot, so unlikely for a meeting, at the same moment. We have already seen how it was that Miss d'Elmar came to be there, and the reader will easily guess what brought Dr. Lebœuf to the cemetery, and whose remains lay in the grave into which Madeleine had looked with timid eyes. It was in obedience to the wish of the dying Sardinian that the excellent physician had, at considerable pains, secured that piece of ground which the wretched man had fixed upon in his last hours, and wishing to see the Italian's desire carried out, and fearful that if he were absent they might lay him somewhere else, the doctor had determined to join the funeral procession himself and see the last of the dead convict.

And so it came to pass that those two met, and

that Madeleine d'Elmar stood all unconsciously by the grave of her father.

It has been said the astonishment of the doctor at this meeting was great, and that it was equalled by that of Miss d'Elmar. In other respects, however, their feelings were widely different. The doctor's mind was full of two things; the marvellous thought that this girl should be here assisting at her father's obsequies without knowing it. This was his first thought, and then he remembered that there was now no longer any reason why Madeleine should hide herself away from Trelane, and he felt overjoyed that he had found her, and determined as soon as this ceremony was over, that he would speak to her, at length, of the Englishman's loyalty and devotion. Such were some of Dr. Lebœuf's thoughts as he beckoned to Madeleine to come round to where he was and speak to him.

Very different were the feelings and thoughts of Madeleine herself. To her all was as before, unchanged. She was parted from Trelane, parted for ever. She was even now flying from him, and she dreaded an encounter with the good old doctor, because she feared a renewal of those importunities with which he had assailed her already when he besought and implored her to let him explain all to the Englishman, and try, by his negotiations, to bring about a happier state of things. So when she obeyed the doctor's summons, it was with the

determination of taking the very first opportunity of slipping away unobserved. She went round then to where he stood, and the old doctor took her hand affectionately, as she placed herself beside him.

All this, though it has been long in the narrating, occurred very, very quickly, and the service at the grave, swiftly as it was rattled over, was only about half through.

"I have so much to say to you, my dear young lady," whispered the doctor, under his breath, "so much to say when this is over."

"Ah," thought Madeleine, "more of that vain, hopeless pleading, which it breaks my heart to listen to."

Thus she thought, but she did not speak, and still watched her opportunity to fly. A sudden idea seemed to occur to the doctor.

Madeleine had not yet completed the work of decorating her uncle's grave; some of the flowers (the greater part) she had placed upon it, but some she still held in her hand.

"Ma'mselle," whispered the doctor, "you have some flowers to spare. Drop them upon the coffin, it will be a pious act."

Madeleine bent forward, and looking down once more into the grave, loosed the flowers from her hand. They were February flowers, a few primulas and snowdrops, together with some pale immortelles,

and they fell so softly on the coffin-lid that no one could hear them drop.

"You don't know what you have done," whispered the doctor.

"'*Requiescat in pace*,'" said the priest.

Madeleine waited now, eagerly watching for an opportunity to make her escape. It came.

Another funeral procession was now seen approaching along the very path near to which the Italian's grave had been dug. Indeed, the grave had been opened *so* near to the path that, as the other procession advanced, it was necessary for those who stood near to move aside, in order that it might pass. The priest himself was compelled to move, and the ritual was for the moment interrupted, and as the new funeral was attended by a great many mourners, there was at this time a little inevitable confusion. It was over almost directly, but when the service, now close to its termination, was resumed, and our dear doctor looked round for his young friend, she was nowhere to be seen.

The doctor gazed about him in every direction. He stared after the funeral procession which had just passed. He could hardly believe the testimony of his own senses when they told him Madeleine was gone. He had felt so confident just before; he had calculated so surely on a long, quiet interview with her; he had been so certain that now, under such altered circumstances, he should be able to make

all right, and now to find himself baffled in his good intentions by the flight of this "obstinate girl," as he could not help calling her. It was really too provoking. And he had not even found out where she was going. If he could even have spoken to the servant, to Victorine, who was with her mistress. No, he was baffled altogether.

The service was over; the last mysterious Latin words had been uttered, and the priest, having received his fee, had taken himself off to cry for mercy on the souls of other dead men and women, to bless other graves, and sprinkle other corpses. The earth had fallen heavily on Madeleine's flowers, and both they and the coffin on which they had dropped were hidden from view. The convict's last wish had been something more than fulfilled. He had but hoped that his daughter's feet might wander sometimes near to where he lay—and lo, she had stood beside his open grave and cast sweet flowers upon his coffin.

"*A porta inferi erue, Domine, animam ejus,*" were words which had just been uttered. May we not say *Amen?*

And now the doctor was at length free to depart. Mechanically as he passed along the cemetery paths, he looked eagerly about him, hoping that Miss d'Elmar might still be in some part of the garden. It is unnecessary to say that he looked in vain, as by this time Madeleine was far enough away.

"Ah," grumbled Lebœuf to himself, "if I had brought Jacques Morlot with me, she would not have slipped away quite so easily. He has eyes in the back of his head."

When the doctor got to the gate, he questioned the man who kept it.

"Oh, yes," the man said, "I have seen both the lady and her maid. They went away down the hill in a carriage, and at a rattling pace, some time since. Lor' bless you, I have seen them here often enough; the bonne, in fact, is quite an old acquaintance of mine, and we always have a bit of gossip. By-the-by, may I take the liberty of asking your name?" the man said, interrupting himself suddenly.

"I am Doctor Lebœuf," said the physician.

"Then I have a message for you, Monsieur le Médecin, from that very young woman. She slipped aside just now as her mistress was getting into the carriage, and said, 'You must find out Dr. Lebœuf, who is attending a funeral here, and say to him simply these two words, *La Belgique;* he will understand you, and it is all I know about something he is interested in.'"

"'La Belgique,' hein?" said the doctor, sharply.

"That was what Ma'mselle Victorine said," the man replied, "and she was gone—gone in a twinkling."

"Well, well," muttered the doctor to himself as

he walked away to find the omnibus, "Belgium is not such a very large country, so we have some sort of clue after all. That young woman's heart is in the right place."

If to have her heart set upon her young mistress's happiness were to have that organ in the right place, then it is quite certain that what Doctor Lebœuf affirmed concerning Ma'mselle Victorine was entirely true. The bonne had long ago made up her mind that Madeleine and the English gentleman were made for each other, and that all things that kept them asunder were ridiculous scruples and vain chimeras. So she was resolved that it should not be her fault if Trelane wanted opportunities of pursuing his suit. The girl had told the truth when she said that all she knew concerning her mistress's intended journey was that it was into Belgium. Nor was she guilty of any breach of confidence in mentioning what she had only learnt by accident. If she had been told to what place Madame d'Elmar was bound and put upon parole, she would certainly have kept the secret at whatever cost to her inclination.

Doctor Lebœuf went back with all convenient speed to Paris, and in due time found himself once more in his own comfortable study at Versailles.

Arrived there, the good doctor sat down without loss of time, and wrote off to Trelane, who was in Paris, and already engaged in a fruitless endeavour

to trace the two English ladies. The doctor told him of all that had happened at the Belleville Cemetery, and transferred to him the end of the clue which Victorine had placed in his hands. "You had better," wrote the doctor, "visit, without delay, the principal towns of Belgium."

And what, the reader will perhaps ask, had all this time become of Trelane? How was it that he had not accompanied his friend the doctor to the Belleville Cemetery, or even supplied his place there? Surely had he done so, it would have been impossible for Miss d'Elmar to have eluded his vigilance.

But Trelane was otherwise occupied. He had determined to find Madeleine. He had pledged himself to do so. And now he was already engaged in the first necessary researches, little thinking what was then taking place at the cemetery, or how soon the tidings would reach him which would at least tell him which way to look.

Ignorant of the help so near at hand, Trelane had at this time undertaken no less a labour than that of inquiring at all the most respectable hotels in Paris for any ladies answering the description of Madame d'Elmar and her niece. And a more arduous and ungrateful task it would be difficult to conceive. First of all, it was by no means easy to get anybody to listen to his inquiries at all; then if he did succeed in getting a listener, this person would invariably turn out to be the especial

officer whose business it was *not* to know who was in the house or out of it; and so Trelane would be referred to some other individual, in search of whom the first official would scream up staircases and groan down pipes, and rush out into court-yards, with loud and dismal bellowings. This personage found, always began by stating that these ladies were in the house, and always ended by affirming with terrific violence that they were not.

It was a dreadful undertaking, this. A thing to keep a man busy all day, and leave him at the end of it with a sense that he had done nothing after all, a thankless miserable office in the doing, and leading to nothing when done!

It may be conceived, then, with what eager interest our Englishman devoured that letter of Dr. Lebœuf's when it came to hand; and how he blamed himself for not having gone to the cemetery himself instead of wasting his time in fruitless researches at Paris. The end of the letter was, however, more consolatory. It was no small thing that that hateful labour at Paris was now rendered unnecessary, and that his field of search was so much reduced in size. "Belgium" meant Antwerp, Ghent, or Brussels, and these three small towns it would not take long to examine thoroughly.

Trelane decided to try the last-named capital first, and the earliest train next morning bore him, with a hopeful heart, away from Paris.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATIONS FOR PENITENCE.

THE little carnival at Brussels was in all its small glory. For a time, business was to a great extent suspended. The inhabitants of the town seemed all to have turned out into the streets, and the parc, the boulevard, and the Montagne de la Cour, were crowded with pedestrians. That is to say, there was a crowd for Brussels, or indeed for any place, except this over-grown London of ours, where it is fast becoming impossible to walk the streets, to attend any popular gathering, or to get up to a railway-station, by reason of the monstrous crush of men and women, whom no bounds can hold in.

But the crowd at Brussels is a different affair—it is within reasonable limits. It is never so great anywhere as to prevent your seeing easily whatever you may want to see. It is a crowd that makes one enjoy a spectacle more, not a mob that causes one to forego the most interesting sight in the world rather than encounter it. This lively moving crowd

was pretty well spread over the more modern parts of the town; but the more antiquated regions, such as the fine old *Place* with its glorious buildings, and the strictly commercial outskirts about the canal-basins, were very much deserted. So was the greater part of that great ring of boulevard which surrounds the town, and of which not more than a fourth part is devoted to the purposes of a fashionable promenade.

Trelane did justice to both the solitary and populous portion of the town. Brussels was a favourite place with him, and a gay and charming little city it certainly is; indeed, there really seems to be but one drawback to Brussels, for which, moreover, the town itself is hardly responsible—it is full of scamps. Is there any place in Europe, Baden and perhaps Boulogne excepted, where so many doubtful characters assemble as at Brussels? Where does one see more wigs and beards savouring of disguise? where more obvious insolvency? where more rouge? Unhappily, too, the scamps here are for the most part English. It is actually almost a compromising admission in Brussels, to own that you are a native of Great Britain. Far from gaining you that reputation for wealth and liberality which it wins for you in other parts of the Continent, it is ten to one that the Belgian tradesmen, on hearing that you are English, will at once set you down as one with whom ready-money transactions alone are to be thought of.

The Belgian tradesman, however, was at this carnival time engaged in no business transactions, either ready money or otherwise. Though, according to the excellent foreign custom, the shops were open as far as the windows were concerned, the doors were locked, and business was suspended. This is a much better plan than ours of putting up the shutters on the occasion of every general holiday; thereby giving to our streets an appearance the least festive possible, and suggesting that some great public calamity has just plunged the town in despair.

That it was carnival time in Brussels was proclaimed to the senses in many ways; to the ears by unaccustomed festive noises; to the eyes by unaccustomed festive sights. We have spoken of open shop-windows with the wares behind them exposed, as if the shop was still available for business purposes. But there were other windows—windows of shop-fronts, which were differently fitted up. These had been stripped of everything that was at all suggestive of commerce, and, hung with curtains and carpeted, were made to resemble little decorated rooms, into which, however, the public was at full liberty to stare to its heart's content; a privilege of which it was not slow to avail itself.

For these shop-windows were got up expressly for show, and sitting in them in groups were all sorts of pretty children, dressed up with infinite taste in

fancy costumes of the freshest and daintiest description. It is hardly possible to imagine a prettier sight. Sometimes there would be a group of little things got up like figures in Dresden china. These wore powder in their hair, were decorated with patches, and—there is no concealing the fact—with rouge, their little laced boddices and flowered skirts all in true costume, and infinitely pretty. In another window there would be a collection of smart peasants, all in bright colours; and Trelane was especially struck by one demure little personage, who was dressed in a high Norman cap, stiffly starched, and who sat with her little hands crossed on her lap, awfully demure and solemn. The performers in these small tableaux vivans were all very young; their ages ranging from eight years downwards, a baby being by no means an uncommon feature in the scene. Sometimes, in the glory of their hearts, the parents of the children and their friends and relations, who were concealed behind in the shop, would part the curtains for a moment, and take a peep at the group which they had been at such pains to get up; but generally there were no adult persons to be seen, and the little masqueraders had it all to themselves. Sometimes, too, the family dog or cat would find his or her way on to the scene, and gravely sit down in a good front place. No one could pass these windows full of children without being put into a good humour, and the

delight of the peasant women, who had come in from the country to see the carnival, and, indeed, of all the women and girls who crowded about these shop-fronts, had in it something that was irresistibly infectious.

Along a certain line of streets there wound a monotonous string of all the carriages, private and public, which Brussels and its neighbourhood could produce. They went at a foot-pace, and were for the most part filled with ladies and gentlemen in full—but not fancy—dress, and who did not seem to be enjoying themselves overmuch. Now and then one of these vehicles would be driven by a coachman in some outrageous costume, or gifted with a nose of gigantic size. And sometimes there would pass a carriage full of ladies in dominoes and masks, or one containing a party of Chinese, or perhaps even a group of friendly baboons, chattering among themselves, and making faces at the passers by. Along the whole line of route, favoured by the procession of carriages, was a good gathering of spectators, who seemed to think it a very fine show indeed, and were evidently of opinion that these vehicles, the best of which were about on a par with the carriage and pair which an ordinary hotel-keeper supplies to his customers, were characterized by a chaste splendour, the like of which few European capitals would be able to emulate.

The streets in all quarters of the town were

visited by bands of Pierrots, who danced along the thoroughfares with that peculiar happy-go-lucky step which is peculiar to the tribe. Mysterious and strange costume—quaint combination of the grotesque and the terrible, in those white ghostly garments, with their flapping frills and furbelows! Other costumes there were few about the streets; a stray debardeur perhaps, or a masque in Spanish costume, with pink skirts, black lace, and mantilla complete.

Altogether it was a gay, amusing scene; not a crack carnival such as you find in Italy, but a pretty little compact festival, which showed this most charming town off to great advantage. Trelane passed on from street to street, and from one quarter of the city to another, and took in all that was to be seen, but his attention was not all for the carnival or for the town. He had, as the reader knows, an object in view, which was ever in his thoughts, and as he looked he SEARCHED. He scrutinized the occupants of the carriages as they went by; he examined the pedestrians who passed him, and he did not forget the windows of such houses as might contain those whom he was seeking for. It was in Belgium that he was to search, and was he not now in Belgium's chiefest town? But Brussels, though a small capital, is large enough to puzzle a man who has to examine it throughout, and many are the out-of-the-way streets and places in even that

little town where persons of good condition may manage for a time to reside.

Being mostly in the more crowded parts of the little city, and knocking against fresh people at every turn, it was quite possible on such an occasion for any man, but particularly for one who was absorbed in a special search, to remain for a very long time entirely unconscious that he himself was the object of any one's scrutiny, however close it might be. Indeed, in a scene where there was so much that was strange to attract people's eyes, a man who was sensible of having nothing remarkable about him would be singularly unlikely to imagine that anybody would take the trouble of noticing him, there being so many more worthy objects of attention in all directions. Yet though there *was* so much to look at—people in strange dresses, carriages containing the *élite*, as it was called, of the neighbourhood, and shop-windows full of children in fancy costumes—and though the external appearance of our Englishman had nothing in the least eccentric about it, certain it is that he was closely observed by one person in that crowd, and by that person followed wherever he went.

The individual who thus dogged the footsteps of our Englishman ran no risk of identification, being dressed in the costume of a Pierrot, and masked. Indeed it might at first have been a matter of question, so complete was the disguise, whether this

personage was a man or woman; but after a little consideration the small stature, slight form, and the peculiar flexibility of the Pierrot's figure would have left little doubt in any one's mind that the character was, in this case, sustained by a member of what hen-pecked gentlemen are apt to call "the weaker sex." This particular Pierrot had been dancing along with several others arm in arm through the Brussels streets on the afternoon in late February with which we are concerned. She—for we will take her weakness of sex as an established fact—had been the gayest of the gay and the most frolicsome of the whole band, when suddenly, on turning the corner of a certain street which leads out of the Montagne de la Cour, this whole party of irresponsible-looking beings came to a place where, drawn up among other spectators to see what was going on, stood an English gentleman, very quietly dressed, and with nothing particularly to distinguish him unless it was a scar down one side of his face partially concealed by a two months' beard. To the mass of those skipping performers this apparition was naturally a thing wholly unimportant; indeed, it is a grave question whether this gentleman was even seen by any individual member of the group, except one.

But this one, dancing and skipping at the time, came to a sudden stop when her eyes lit upon the Englishman. Then she contrived to detach herself from her companions, and, still with the same step,

danced away to where the stranger stood, and, passing him very closely, managed to get a good look at his face, herself remaining unobserved. From this time, and having apparently convinced herself by that scrutiny, Pierrot never lost sight of the Englishman. Wherever he was she was. Sometimes she danced along beside a carriage which kept her concealed from Trelane's observation, sometimes she joined for a moment any others belonging to the Pierrot tribe who happened to pass by, or disappeared for a while in the crowd, but she still kept our Englishman in sight, and never forgot him for a single moment.

At last the notion appeared suddenly to come into her head that she might get some sport out of this accidental meeting, and from concealing herself carefully from Trelane's view as she had done at first, she got to approaching him fearlessly, and at last even to soliciting, as it seemed, his notice. She danced about him, came across his path for a moment, and then disappeared again, darting away immediately among the passers by. For a long time, even now, Trelane failed to observe that there was in all this anything special. Of course he remarked the continual presence of Pierrot, and was, perhaps, a little bored by it, but still he did not for a moment think that he was in any way connected with the masker's gyrations, still less did he imagine that he himself had been recognized.

It was not, in fact, until he had turned aside into

a street where the crowd was thinner, and noticed that even now the inevitable Pierrot was still at his side, that he began to think that this tiresome personage was purposely following him, and to speculate as to what it could possibly mean. When he did begin to speculate he could make nothing of it, except that there must be some mistake. He must be taken for somebody else; there could be no doubt of it. Whom did he know who would be likely to dress up in that preposterous fashion, and dance like a mountebank about the streets of Brussels? At the same time the thing was really becoming a nuisance, and he had serious thoughts of addressing Monsieur or Madame Pierrot, as the case might be, and putting a period promptly to his or her illusions. But if Trelane had any intention at this time of speaking, it is certain that the idea was soon abandoned, and he resolved to go quietly on his way and see whether Pierrot might not at last be daunted by an entire and systematic neglect.

Pursuing this plan, our Englishman walked briskly along on his way, and in a little time almost forgot his tormentor's existence, when he suddenly heard these words spoken immediately behind him :—

"So monsieur is too proud to recognize his acquaintances when he meets them in unexpected places."

Trelane turned quickly round, and there, of course, was the inevitable Pierrot. She skipped back, how-

ever, in a moment, as if fearing that she should be detained by main force.

"Wicked behaviour," said the masque. "Pride, you know, is one of the seven deadly sins, monsieur."

"You must be making some mistake," Trelane said, good-humouredly. "You are taking me for somebody else."

"Pierrots never make mistakes, *Monsieur le Major*," replied the masque.

Trelane was confounded. That he was recognized he could not doubt. But who was this person, who knew the title by which he went, and, probably, his name also? It was a woman at any rate, the voice made him feel sure of that, but who? He did not remember the voice. He had a sort of idea that he might have heard it before, but he had not the remotest notion where or under what circumstances. In short, he was certain of nothing about it.

"Pierrots never mistake," repeated the masque. "Their sources of information are unlimited, but their readiness to supply the same depends upon circumstances."

Trelane listened on. His only chance was in recognizing the voice. The fluttering, loosely-dressed figure before him, looking in the now fading light like a white moth, might be anybody in the world—anybody, that is, of a short stature, and a slight and active make. Pierrot was very closely masked, and her hair was gathered out of sight under a queer conical

white hat with a turned-up brim. The voice then was the only chance.

"We are a happy race," continued the masque; "we never do any work; we never pay our bills; we are always laughing, dancing, singing; we have no responsibilities, no duties, no cares."

"And you know everything?" asked Trelane.

"Everything," was the answer.

"Then perhaps you can tell me my name, as well as my title?"

"Of course I can," replied the masque, with confidence, "and a great many other things as well, but not here."

They were talking in rather a public situation, and already the idlers were beginning to stand about and listen, considering what sort of conversation could be going on between that respectably got-up Englishman and a Pierrot.

In a moment the last had scampered away and joined some other Polchinellos, who had approached within a short distance. Trelane kept them in view, and followed. His curiosity was powerfully stirred, and a strange sort of presentiment was in his mind that this adventure might be in some way connected with the especial object which had brought him to Belgium. It was now getting somewhat dark, but those white figures were easily kept in view. He could even detect his own particular Pierrot among the rest; while she, turning about from time to time

as she danced along, seemed also to be keeping her eye upon the Englishman.

The little snatch of conversation which has been quoted above took place near to one of the entrances to the *Galerie de St. Hubert.* The Pierrots went on their way in the direction of the Montagne de la Cour. The line of route which they had chosen was very much crowded, though less so than it had been earlier in the day. Still there was no sort of difficulty in getting along, or in keeping the masques within sight. From time to time, too, Trelane's especial Pierrot would dance out of the band, and find her way to where the Englishman walked among the undisguised portion of the community. She would seem thus at once to encourage him on to follow, and at the same time, to a certain extent, to watch him and prevent him from escaping, supposing he were so minded.

In this way they all got at last to that very steep portion of the Montagne de la Cour which leads directly to the Place Royale. At this point Trelane's mysterious acquaintance suddenly separated herself from her friends, and, darting down a side street leading to the right, made a sign to Trelane to follow.

Trelane did so almost mechanically, and certainly supposing that whatever the Pierrot might have to say to him would now be forthcoming. But here he was widely mistaken. Down a long street which led

past one of the entrances to the market, his new acquaintance tripped along in front of him, looking back from time to time, and beckoning him on with a gesture which had in it a rather irritating sense of power and importance.

At last our Englishman began to get a little tired of the joke. "I am being made a fool of," he said to himself. And such seemed the impression of the different passengers in the street who stared after him, and jeered at him not a little, for sometimes she would even insist on taking his arm, and walking along in a jaunty manner by his side. At last Trelane could stand it no longer, and finally struck.

"I am not going any farther," he said. They had turned off into an unfrequented byway, where there were few passers-by. "If you are going to tell me why you have picked me out for purposes of persecution, tell it me at once."

"I shall not tell it you at once, and yet you will not cease to accompany me," retorted Pierrot.

"I shall not, eh?" asked the Englishman, incredulously.

"No," replied Pierrot, with intense conviction in her tone.

"And may I ask why not?"

"Because I happen, Monsieur le Major, to know the object which has brought you to Brussels, and because in the search in which you are engaged *I*

can assist you. Come!" she cried, and off she started once more; and it is needless to say that her prediction was verified, and that Trelane accompanied her.

There never was anything more provoking than the behaviour of this detestable Pierrot. Over and over again she would stop, and make as if she had come to a determination to say at once what she had to say, and then off she would start again and drag Trelane off after her to some other spot, where the same performance would be gone through again. At last they reached a great dismal square, called the *Grand Sablon*, almost entirely depopulated, its inhabitants being all away in other parts of the town, where the carnival was flourishing. Here the masque did at length seem satisfied with the completeness of the solitude, and, seating herself on a stone bench, motioned to Trelane to take his place beside her. He had no sooner done so, however, than Pierrot caught sight of a very old woman crawling along the pavement in a remote part of the place, and, instantly starting up, went off again at the top of her speed, vowing that the Grand Sablon was too public a place for the revelation which she had to make.

Trelane cursed his situation again and again, and even now had serious thoughts more than once of abandoning the ridiculous adventure; but the words let drop by his companion, "in the search in which

you are engaged I can assist you," stuck by him, and he could not persuade himself that they were mere chance expressions, part of the conventional repertoire of every masquerader. So he still continued to follow on wherever he was led, from the Grand Sablon to the Petit Sablon, and thence along the street which leads to the Place Royale and the Parc, and back once more into the Montagne de la Cour. They had only, however, descended this thoroughfare a few yards when the masque suddenly darted down a very narrow street, leading away to the left, and again indicated to Trelane that his business lay in that direction.

True to the enterprise in which he had engaged, our Englishman obeyed. The little narrow street was not a long one, and led into an enormous and in that dim light a most melancholy looking square or *Place*. There were houses only on one side of this great enclosure, and the other three sides were formed by the wings and main body of a vast and chilly-looking edifice, with a courtyard in front of it enclosed within iron railings, and with a ghastly statue in the middle. The Place du Musée, as this square was called, was ill-lighted and entirely deserted. It was vast and cold, and had, as has been said, a building in the Palladian style enclosing three sides of it. It would be difficult to imagine anything more dreary.

Arrived in this deserted place, apparently so

uncongenial to the tastes of a Pierrot, Trelane's companion came to a halt, as if disposed for a parley. She seated herself on the dwarf wall into which the iron railings were set, and indicated to the Englishman that he would do well to follow her example. Pierrot had, however, placed herself immediately against the post which sustained one of the lamps by which the Place du Musée was lighted, and the rays of light did not reach the spot she had chosen, for the lamp was a large one and the iron structure on which it rested massive, so that objects immediately beneath it were thrown into deep shadow. The white figure looked rather ghostly seated in that shade.

"So you think I shall be puzzled about your name?" said the masque, after pausing a little while for breath. "You are mistaken, Monsieur Trelane."

There was a moment's silence after this, and Pierrot went on.

"You see I *do* know everything."

"You know my name, at any rate," replied Trelane, "but after all that is not much. You might have learnt it at the hotel."

"And pray, why should I take that trouble, Monsieur le Major?"

"With a view to a carnival frolic, perhaps," replied the Englishman.

"I am as fond of a carnival frolic as another,"

answered the Pierrot, "but there is more in it than that, monsieur, as you will find."

"Well, let me hear the 'more,'" said the Englishman, a little impatiently. "You are a long time in parting with your information."

"Before I answer all your questions, monsieur," said Pierrot, "I must trouble you to reply to some of mine."

"And why must I do so?" asked the major.

"Because, in return, I may, as I said before, be able to give you some *information which you want very much.*"

Trelane was silent. This was the very thought that had involuntarily crossed his mind at the beginning of the interview. And then came the question again, who was this woman who knew so much and whose identification was so impossible to him? What could he make of that mass of white gathered up in the shadow? What of a voice evidently disguised, and muffled also by the mask? Yet at times, only for a moment, one or two words would be uttered which he seemed faintly to recognize as spoken in a voice which he had heard but with which he was not familiar.

"Well," he said at last, "I am at your mercy, and I suppose I must capitulate. What is it that you want to know?"

"I want to know, to begin with, where you have been since the day when you fought that duel at

Versailles and half killed a worthy gentleman with fright, or apoplexy, or epilepsy, or whatever it was?"

"I have been chiefly engaged in travelling," answered Trelane.

"With any object?" asked the Pierrot.

"Certainly with an object," was the answer.

"And what may have induced you to turn your steps in the direction of Brussels?"

"Some information which I received and by which I was led to think that I should best further my object by going there," said Trelane.

"And how long have you been here?"

"I arrived here only yesterday."

"Have you had any success as yet?" asked the masque.

"At present, none."

"And what steps have you taken hitherto?" inquired Trelane's tormentor.

"I have made some inquiries," replied the Englishman, "but I have been, up to this time, engaged more in using my eyes than my ears."

"Ah, you are looking for somebody, then?"

Trelane was silent. Considering that he did not know to whom he was speaking, he felt rather averse to answer such a leading question.

"I might be able to help you, you know," said Pierrot, speaking again.

"What do you mean?" asked Trelane.

"I mean that if you happened to be looking for

somebody, with whose whereabouts I chanced to be acquainted, it would be a curious coincidence and might turn out favourably for that 'object' of yours."

"Suppose I were to own," said Trelane, who was becoming more and more interested in this dialogue, "that what you have suggested is the case."

"And suppose I were next to inquire whether the 'objects' of your pursuit were two ladies—one old, the other young—one the aunt, the other the niece—both English, but having a French name—both related to the worthy gentleman whom you so nearly disposed of at Versailles? Suppose ——"

"Stop!" cried the Englishman, "you have said enough."

"Oh, I have a great deal more to say yet," answered the Pierrot, provokingly.

"Say it then, in Heaven's name!" cried Trelane, impatiently.

But his tormentor was not disposed to let him off so easily. She had got a chance of playing with him as a cat does with a mouse, and she was determined to make the best possible use of it. She burst into such a hearty laugh that a half-tipsy Belgian who was passing at a distance, hearing it, bellowed forth his own rough imitation of the sound, and caused the echoes of the silent *Place* to ring again. Pierrot waited till all was quiet and then she spoke again.

"The information you want shall be yours,

monsieur," said this perplexing personage. "But you must wait for it a little."

"And why?" asked Trelane.

"Because I have not yet got all the information that is necessary myself."

"And when do you expect to have it?" asked Trelane.

"This very evening," replied the masque.

"And how am I to obtain it?" inquired the Englishman.

"Monsieur, there is this evening at the theatre in the Place de la Monnaie a bal masqué. If you will take care to be there at ten o'clock this evening, you shall have the information of which you stand in need."

"And how am I to know that you will be there?" asked Trelane, his anxiety making him somewhat ungallant.

"Monsieur!" said the masque, with an air of offended dignity; and the Pierrot rose from her seat as if to depart forthwith.

"Stay," interposed the Englishman, "I did not mean that; but you did not promise that you would be there."

"I *do* promise," replied the masque, solemnly. "But," she added, after a moment's pause, "on one condition, and one only, which is this—you must make no attempt to follow me, or in any way try to ascertain what becomes of me when I leave this place, and

you must give me your word of honour, monsieur, as a gentleman, that you will remain in this very spot, the Place du Musée, for one quarter of an hour after I shall have left it. Stay," she added, after a moment's pause, "what time is it now?"

"It wants ten minutes to six," said Trelane, after consulting his watch.

"Very well, then, at five minutes after six you may leave, but not a moment before. Do you accept the terms?"

"I have no choice but to accept them," replied the Englishman.

"And you promise?"

"I do."

"Remember, then, you are on parole."

In a moment more Trelane was alone and watching the dim white figure as it flitted away, more moth-like than ever, round the side of the square in the direction of the Place Royale. It seemed to waver at the corner for a moment, and then disappeared altogether.

"Who *can* it be?" Trelane thought to himself as he paced up and down in front of the museum.

That she really knew whom he was seeking for seemed certain to him, that she knew who he himself was appeared equally so. Her questions and her answers left no doubt about the matter so far; there could be no chance or guess-work about questions and answers so definite and intelligible. And yet

there was he himself utterly at sea. Was it some one who knew him, or who had only heard about him? The most provoking part of it was that there was in some dim and inaccessible region of Trelane's memory some faint recollection of some of the tones of the voice he had just been listening to; yet as to identifying it, or saying where he had heard those tones, his memory would not help him to that, strain it as he might.

One thing, however, that made all the rest endurable was the conviction that here, at any rate, was a clue by which, ere long, he might hope to find those whose very existence he was almost, at times, tempted to doubt, regarding his intercourse with them as some unreal fabrication of his dreams. And this episode in Trelane's life, of which we have given the history, was, indeed, so detached from the rest of his career that he really might have stood excused for doubting sometimes whether it was a true page in his history, or some interpolation—the work of the romancer's hand.

And strange, indeed, it had all been from beginning to end, and this vision of a white phantom—knowing Trelane and his affairs, but wholly unknown to him—strangest of all. At any rate there he was in that Place du Musée, walking up and down. There was so much of reality in it, at all events. Perhaps he was awake after all. Perhaps to-night he might hear tidings which might affect his whole life. Per-

haps on the morrow, he might—who could tell?—be in the right way once again. Nay, on that very morrow, he might, for aught he knew, be standing face to face—

Trelane checked these sanguine thoughts, which would have carried him away too far. He looked at his watch, and found that he had already been at his post longer than was necessary.

Only too glad to get away from this dreary place, Trelane was just about to depart, when, happening to glance towards the spot where his late companion had been sitting beneath the lamp, his eye lit upon a small oblong patch of something white lying on the ground. Trelane went to the place where this object lay and picked it up. It was a letter, and, being so, was of course sacred as to its contents. The outside, however, belonged to everybody, and our Englishman had no sooner bestowed one look on the directed envelope, than in one instant the whole mystery, which he had been in vain endeavouring to fathom, was revealed to him.

The letter was directed to "Madame Ponsard, Rue des Carmelites, 15, Bruxelles."

"Madame Ponsard!"

As if it could have been anybody else. As if there was any other person in the world who would be so well informed about the things which that rascally Pierrot had been talking of, about Trelane himself, about Madame d'Elmar and her niece, and about Alexis. As if any one else would be so

entirely at home in that carnival scene, so immersed in the fun of the moment. Balls, masks, dressing-up, was not Ponsard simply in her element when dealing with such things; and was it not the most extraordinary thing in the world that Trelane had not—before he and the Pierrot had exchanged half a dozen words—guessed who his tormentor was? We can only account for his obtuseness in this matter by remembering how very little he had seen of this remarkable woman, and how small a part she had played in the little Versailles drama.

It must be owned that Trelane felt a good deal relieved by the discovery which he had made. From what he had heard, he had been led to believe that Ponsard was, in spite of her eccentricities, a woman with a good heart, and he thought it likely that she would do all that lay in her power to aid him in making the discoveries which he was bent on pursuing. Now, too, even supposing—which Trelane did not suppose—that Ponsard was to play him a trick, he knew where to find her, and had got the means of tracing her without sacrificing the pledge which he had given. Altogether, he felt tolerably satisfied with his day's work, and sanguine about the future.

Our Englishman had still some time to fill up before the hour to which he was looking forward so eagerly should arrive. Emerging from that dismal *Place*, the streets of the little city looked gay and

brilliant as Trelane passed along them. In those streets there was still a great stir and bustle, and it was as easy to see that it was carnival time in the evening, as it had been in the morning. Trelane felt a keen sense of enjoyment as he walked along. Queer sounds reached him of braying trumpets and distant choruses which the revellers were singing about the streets, and now he found himself suddenly in the Place St. Gudule, through which his road lay. The huge church, dedicated to the saint, rose black and massive in the centre of the square, and the Englishman turned aside, and pushing open the small, swinging door which gave access to the building, found himself in one moment in a very different world from that which he had just left outside.

How enormous was this place, how mysterious and solemn! Lighted by but a few candles, and by that hanging lamp before the altar, *which must never expire*, the vast building was one great black mass of shadow, its architectural shapes being but barely indicated—not shown—here and there, where some corner of the masonry caught a muffled ray of light, so dim, that the objects closely within the range of its rays, were themselves barely discernible. There was no service going on, but some few persons, to whom the carnival was less a time of enjoyment than a season to be used as a preparation for the approaching Lent, were kneeling at the prie-Dieu chairs or on the bare stones near to their own

favourite altars. The confessionals, too, were not empty, and near to most of them were penitents engaged in prayer or meditation, and waiting till it was their turn to enter those grim boxes, and recount in muffled whisperings the sins of a week, a month, or a year, as the case might be.

Trelane remained long in the church. That silence, broken only by an occasional word, half audible in that world of echoes, and coming from the mouth of one of the confessional priests, or by the shuffling footsteps of the old sacristan, or perhaps, by a sigh that came from one of those kneeling figures by the side altar; a silence such as this was at once impressive and reposeful. It was with difficulty that our Englishman could persuade himself to leave the place, and when at length he did so, he felt as if the very soul within him had had rest.

Ah, of what contrasts are our poor lives made up! A little while ago, Trelane was talking with a dressed-up Pierrot; a little while hence he will be at a masked ball, where all will be noise and tinsel, where vice and folly will surround him on every side, and where misery will appear in its most ghastly form, holding both its sides with laughter.

But Trelane, as has been before said, had determined to find Madeleine d'Elmar. He had pledged himself to do so, and whatever was needful towards the accomplishment of that object, must be encountered, whether agreeable or painful.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE PREPARATIONS FOR PENITENCE.

We left Trelane in the last chapter of the narrative in a state of almost feverish anxiety to obtain the information which had been promised to him, on the sole condition that he should attend a certain masked ball given at Brussels on the occasion of the carnival which is usually held in that city.

The desire to gain that knowledge which the mischievous Pierrot of the morning had pledged herself to impart to him, was a feeling which now held undivided sway in his mind. The sensation of curiosity which had once mingled to some slight extent with this desire to know, was now removed. It was no longer a question who the mysterious masque could be. This doubt, which had perplexed our Englishman so long, and had, to some extent, rendered him incredulous as to Pierrot's power of enlightening him, was altogether removed; and now that he knew that his tormentor was no other than the mercurial Ponsard, he felt sure that the information he required

was really hers to give, and he also felt a tolerable certainty that the woman was too good-natured, and too anxious to bring about a meeting between himself and Madeleine, to withhold it. All he feared now was lest some unforeseen accident should keep Madame Ponsard from fulfilling her promise.

And lucky it was for Trelane that the good woman was still entirely unconscious that the secret of her identity was in his hands. Behind the shelter of a disguise she could do anything. As a Pierrot, or whatever character else she might be at the time personating, she was one person; as Madame Ponsard the dress-maker, she was another. In this last capacity she would have felt it to be utterly impossible to have tormented the English gentleman, who was the friend of her employer and patroness, Madame d'Elmar. She would have felt it to be even a liberty. But as a disguised masquer she did not care what tricks she played with one who was himself identified to some extent with the carnival sports, by the mere fact of his being present at them. She was a Pierrot, and not Madame Ponsard again till the carnival was over and Lent begun. Had she known that she was now, in the English gentleman's eyes, purely and simply Madame Ponsard, I repeat that the chances would have been against her having the courage to face him.

The principal streets of Brussels were comparatively deserted when Trelane passed through them

on his way from his hotel to the theatre. One large portion of the population was engaged in dressing up for the masquerade, while a second, the looking-on division, was already in the theatre, having hurried there under the impression that the seats would be apportioned on the "first-come, first-served" principle; a third set was stationed along the line of streets which gave immediate access to the building, anxious to get an eleemosynary glimpse of the dresses of the masquers.

We have thus disposed of a tolerable portion of the population of the town, without counting the numerous individuals who, too poor to have anything to say to the first-class entertainment in the Place de la Monnaie, had wandered off to the third and fourth rate dancing establishments which were open that night in different parts of the little city and its suburbs, and where persons of the most limited incomes and the most defective wardrobes might still find facilities for making fools of themselves as well as their betters. When all's told the people who paid down their ten or twenty franc pieces, and those who disbursed merely a fifty-centime coin, were pretty much on a par in that one respect, only differing in the amount which they paid away for the right of saying and doing a great many idiotic things, and earning the inestimable privilege of a seedy morrow. How many glittering coins do we all of us pay away, how much trouble do we all take, what inconveniences and even humilia-

tions do we put up with, every one of us, in the course of our respective careers, with no much better reward!

Trelane was at the theatre long before there was anything doing there. The workmen were not all out of the building, though only engaged in giving a new turn to some fold of hanging drapery, or looping up some festoon which had escaped from bondage. Everything else, as far as the eye could see, was ready; but from regions to which that organ could not penetrate, there came, of course, the sound of that inevitable hammer which on these occasions is never silenced till the overture begins, and not always then.

The Englishman was, however, very far from being a solitary spectator of what was going on. A large part of the audience—that portion which meant to assist at the ball by looking on at it—the wise people who preferred seeing others sacrificing their dignity to compromising their own—were assembled in force, and all the best places were already secured. This mattered little, however, to Trelane, who intended to lead a wandering life that evening, and who, if he had had the most advantageous seat in the house, was in much too fidgety a condition to have remained in it for any length of time.

So, first from one part of the building and then from another, our Englishman watched what was going on, observing how, by almost imperceptible degrees, the theatre began to fill—how a few persons

began now to appear in the region dedicated to dancing, the pit, that is to say, and the stage, both conveniently floored over. He observed, moreover, that, at last, some of these new-comers appeared in costume, and that they were overwhelmed by their own self-consciousness, and were prone to get into corners and behind buttresses and pillars, waiting till more of their kind should arrive before they dared to emerge into the open country.

At last the great sloping orchestra, which had been erected between the pit and the stage, began to be populated. One after another the heads of the different musical geniuses popped up the companion ladder which conducted to the depths beneath. One after another, spectacled, for the most part, and hugging the cases which contained their instruments, they rose to the surface, and then ascended to their different positions in the structure, seating themselves with a disgusting composure before their desks, arranging their sheets of music conveniently, screwing together all sorts of mysterious tubes and incongruous mouth-pieces, packing away their green-baize bags under their chairs, and making all snug for the night, with a provoking indifference to theatres and masked balls, and a want of curiosity with regard to the coming wonders of the evening, which was enough to have sent the assembling company home again to their beds. This effect, however, was not produced by the proceedings of these gentlemen.

A masked ball abroad is not the entirely low and blackguard thing which it is in our own country. In Italy, ladies and gentlemen of unimpeachable respectability, and who would in England shrink from the thought of attending a masquerade, will dress themselves up in all sorts of disguises, and spend an evening in trying to mystify each other as much as possible; and though a carnival ball at Brussels is a very different affair from a similar entertainment held in some small Italian town, yet is it also widely different from the London orgie which goes by the name of a masked ball, and can at any rate boast—which, after all, is something—of being attended by a mixed company, not *all* bad.

Trelane wandered about among the fancifully-dressed personages assembled in the theatre of the Place de la Monnaie, feeling rather solitary and like a fish out of water. He was himself undisguised, and this circumstance, perhaps, exempted him, in some degree, from the facetious attacks of the masquers. Yet he was not altogether left unmolested.

What a scene it was! The persons who attended this ball were not contented with mere fancy dresses and masks. There was less of a run than might have been expected on stage boots and Louis Quatorze curls, nor were the powder-costumes or the Elizabethan ruffs and trunk hosen so popular as they are on fancy-dress occasions in our own country. At this Brussels ball, the costumes alluded

to were, of course, well represented, nor were the Troubadour, the Crusader, or the Debardeur, wanting. There were plenty of all these; plenty of Turks, Greeks, and Cossacks. But what rendered the scene more strange—adding to it a certain wild and ghastly element, without which it would have been less striking—was the presence of certain masquers, who had chosen to make their effects by means in themselves grim and repulsive to the last degree. There were savages in this ball-room decorated with war-paint horrible to behold; there were North American Indians flourishing their tomahawks; there were hideous baboons, gigantic cats, frogs, toads, and even skeletons. These ghastly masquers, by-the-by, were invariably Frenchmen, that nation having a singular taste for these horrors; nor is there any other capable of developing them with such terrible effect. The French nation also excel in getting up that wonderful figure which is supposed to be the true type of an Englishman, and of which top-boots, a white great coat with a short cape, a broad-brimmed hat, and the frequent utterance of the monosyllable "dam," are the chief component parts.

Among all these strangely attired fellow-creatures who were engaged in carrying out, to the best of their separate abilities, the different characters which they had assumed, Trelane passed along, looking in all directions for the Pierrot of the morning,

the eccentric Madame Ponsard. It has been said that, though not identifying himself with the masquerade by wearing a disguise, Trelane was still not entirely left alone by the fantastic crowd on whose revels he was intruding.

"She's waiting for you there by the pillar on the left-hand side of the proscenium."

"You'd better be quick. I saw a Greek looking at her just now with signs of considerable admiration."

"She didn't seem to object to it either."

"What chance has an Englishman against a Greek?"

Trelane had come suddenly upon a group of three or four masquers, all members of one party, and it was by them that he was saluted with this volley of what we popularly call "chaff." Shaking himself clear of these, our Englishman would go on a little further to be addressed confidentially by a Debardeur.

"I have a message for you, Mr. Englishman."

"Have you really? What may it be?"

"Nay, you must come away into some more retired spot before I can deliver it."

"Here or nowhere."

"Well, she's not coming to-night."

"Oh, indeed."

"And if you remain in the ball-room a single instant after hearing that, she's never going to speak to you again."

To free himself from being pestered with nonsense such as this, Trelane at length left for a time the main body of the salle, and got away into the boxes, from which he could look on unmolested. From the place which he now occupied, which was on the pit tier, he could see all that went on in the ball-room without himself joining in the proceedings. Here, then, Trelane sat watching eagerly enough for the appearance of Madame Ponsard. He had her letter, by-the-by, in his pocket ready to deliver to her at the right moment.

There were very few members of the Pierrot tribe, as it happened, that evening at the ball, and those who did appear were, for the most part, in stature, and otherwise, so different from the particular individual for whom Trelane was looking out, that it was only once that he thought it necessary to descend into the salle, to examine one of the confraternity more closely, as being possibly the one he was in search of. He had not exchanged two words with this personage, who was very affable and willing to converse, before he discovered his mistake, and retired once more to his previous tower of observation.

He had not returned long to his stronghold, before he began to observe that he was the object of considerable attention on the part of one of the masquers on the floor beneath him. The person who thus distinguished him—continually standing in front of

the box, moving a little away, and then returning and looking up to where he sat incessantly—was a Spanish lady in a pink dress, with mantilla, comb, and fan all complete. She appeared to be entirely alone, and did not join in the dancing, as the other masquers were doing.

For a long time our Englishman took no notice of his Spanish friend, concluding that she only wanted to "chaff" him, as so many of the others had done in the previous part of the evening. Nay, he was so convinced that his only affair was with a Pierrot, and that he had nothing to do with any person in any other species of disguise, that even when the Spanish lady at last impatiently beckoned to him to come down, he was still obdurate, and still kept a sharp look-out for the arrival of any stray Pierrot who might yet turn up even now, late though it was.

Trelane was rewarded for his vigilance. Looking eagerly among the crowd behind the Spanish lady, he suddenly discerned a figure dressed in the familiar white dress, skipping and dancing about after the true Ponsard fashion, and being apparently of about the same size as that estimable lady. It may be imagined that Trelane lost no time in descending from his post, and hurrying in pursuit of the phantom of the Place du Musée.

It was a sufficiently tormenting thing, when in such haste, to be delayed from any cause, but to

be stopped by that tiresome Spanish donna was too much, and Trelane actually turned round and made off, at the top of his speed, directly she confronted him.

"Speak to me of this," said the Spanish lady, as she looked after him, and prepared to follow. "These English are a polite race, at any rate."

Trelane was some time in finding his Pierrot, and when at length he succeeded in doing so, he was doomed to disappointment, this Pierrot being found on inspection to be at least a size larger than the Pierrot he was in search of, and replying to a remark, which the Englishman hazarded in desperation, in a hoarse voice, entirely different from that of the amiable Ponsard.

Returning to his place after this indisputable failure, Trelane, to his infinite vexation, found himself once more face to face with the inevitable Spaniard.

"Oh, this woman!" he groaned to himself. She was, however, not to be eluded this time; and Trelane thought the most hopeful course would be to come to some explanation. The Spanish lady saved him the trouble of opening the conversation.

"How is it," she said, "that I find you talking to a contemptible vulgar Pierrot?"

At the first word uttered by the Spaniard, Trelane could not altogether repress a movement of surprise.

To think that he had been taken in again, though only for so short a time! To think that it had never occurred to him that Madame Ponsard might assume some other costume, besides that of a Pierrot! To think that, till he heard her voice, he had never once guessed that the importunate Spanish lady was the person he was in search of! It *was* the voice, though; there could be no mistake about that, at any rate. Trelane thought it wisest, however, considering the individual with whom he had to do, to humour the jest a little.

"Pierrots are useful people to know sometimes," he said. "They are occasionally possessed of information, which one may seek for in vain in more elevated society."

"Low impostors, every one of them, depend upon it," remarked the donna.

"What, all of them?" asked Trelane, smiling in spite of himself.

"Every one!"

"Yet, I was talking to one of the tribe this very afternoon," continued the major, "who quite astonished me by mentioning circumstances of the most secret nature."

"All done by guess-work," replied this contemptuous lady, "or by some cunning system of leading you on, to give the very information which was afterwards returned to you."

"I assure you," answered Trelane, "that I cannot

account for what I heard on either of those principles."

The Spanish lady shook her head. She was not to be convinced.

"I tell you," she persisted, "that you have been taken in. All these Pierrots are a set of vulgar, ignorant pretenders. That there *are* those in the world who have access to sources of information beyond the reach of their fellows, I willingly admit. In the country to which I belong, for instance—in sunny Andalusia—there are those who have acquired, from the gipsies, powers which, in unscrupulous hands, might be turned to terrible account, but which may be made a *good* use of as well."

"And may I ask," said Trelane, "whether you are one of those gifted persons?"

"To a certain extent I am."

"What can you tell me?" asked the Englishman.

"What did your friend the Pierrot tell you this afternoon?"

"She, for it was a lady, gave me some information on a subject in which I am powerfully interested."

"And was that information complete?" asked the senora.

"No, it stopped short at a point of especial interest and importance."

"Where the Pierrot's sources of information ceased," said the Spanish lady, speaking with an

assumed solemnity, "mine begin. What she could not tell you, *I* can."

The moment had arrived, as Trelane felt.

"Can you?" he asked eagerly.

"Try me," was the answer.

"My friend the Pierrot," said Trelane, "gave me certain tidings of two ladies whom it is the very business of my life, at this time, to find. The exact place of their residence, she either was, or pretended to be, unable to indicate; but she promised on this very evening, and at this very place, to supply that information."

"Impostor! it is I alone who can supply it."

There was a pause at this juncture, and then the Spaniard spoke once more.

"Close to the very place where that wretched Pierrot talked so pretentiously, the windows looking on the very spot where you both stood, is the house you are looking for. Madame d'Elmar and her niece Madeleine live in the Place du Musée, at the corner of the narrow street by which the square is approached from the Montagne de la Cour."

Ah! what words were those? What a part does such a little sentence as that last, play in a narrative such as this? Trelane heard it, and he felt that, indeed, a supreme moment had arrived; and that here, in the midst of folly and masquerading and the lightest bantering talk, words had been spoken which might affect his life for ever. And then, at

that very moment, there came upon him, for no explicable reason, the memory of the dark church of St. Gudule where he had stood so lately; and strange, half-formed thoughts of gratefulness and humility—thoughts not commonly developed in the ordinary course of masked balls—swept dimly across the Englishman's heart.

There was now for some time no speech between these two, who had stood aside so long out of the crowd. As for Trelane, he could not speak. Never for one moment did it cross his mind to doubt the truth of what he had just heard. He *knew* that it was true. He had felt all day, from the time when that masquerading figure had first addressed him in the street, a conviction that he had arrived at a turning point in his life; a certainty that the day had arrived—the hour which he had been looking for. And now he knew that he should see *her* on the morrow, nay, on that very day, for midnight was long past; and, knowing this, he was silent. Perhaps the Spanish lady felt some sympathy and respect for the Englishman's emotion. At all events she spoke not, and watched him curiously from behind her mask. And so these two stood silently, and the crowd danced by them, and the music, loud as it was, failed to drown the voices of this half-mad multitude; and yet it was very doubtful whether any sound was heard by either the Englishman or his temporary companion.

At last Trelane came to himself.

"You have told me," he said, "what is of more moment to me than you can conceive it to be. You have done me a great service—a very great one,"

"I have done somebody else a service, too, I hope," answered the senora. "Somebody who has been very kind to me, and whose happiness I value more than monsieur's even—saving monsieur's presence."

"I can easily imagine what you mean," answered Trelane. "But still, I repeat it, you have done me a service of no ordinary kind. What can I do in return?"

The poor senora! It would have been easy to serve her pecuniarily, if she would have heard of it. How she had pinched and starved to get up that dress in which she now appeared! It was made, after all, of the commonest materials, and at the cheapest conceivable cost; but the woman had taste, was in her way an artist, and it looked splendid.

"Monsieur!" said the Spanish lady, and she spoke quite differently now, and seemed to be not a little agitated—"Monsieur, if you really think that what I have said may help you in your object, you can in return say something to me that will take quite a load off my spirits."

"Ah, and what is that?" asked Trelane. "I think you may look upon it as said already."

"Monsieur, all I want you to say is simply this—that when you discover, as I am afraid you will,

who I am, and learn how low a station in life the senora really occupies, you will pardon her for having ventured to amuse herself by mystifying a gentleman so much her superior as Monsieur le Major Trelane."

Trelane felt in his pocket, and discovered the letter which he had picked up in the afternoon. He smiled as he handed it to its owner.

"This letter," he said, "which was dropped to-day in the Place du Musée by a certain Pierrot of our acquaintance, will convince the Senora Ponsard that I have for some time been aware who it was that was mystifying me."

"Ah! monsieur, monsieur, can you ever forgive such a liberty?"

"Forgive! can I ever be sufficiently grateful, you mean? Don't talk to me about forgiveness."

But say what he might, it was impossible for Trelane to reassure the poor senora. She was another person now that her disguise was disguise no longer. She was Madame Ponsard again, and the frolic was at an end.

"Monsieur," she said, "you will permit me now respectfully to take my leave, and return to some friends I have with me. I can only hope that monsieur's visit to the Place du Musée may be attended with such happy results that he may really look leniently on the means by which he was enabled to make it. Monsieur, bon soir—et pardon!"

It was vain for Trelane to try to detain Madame Ponsard, or to make any attempt to comfort her. It was not to be done, and he was compelled at last to allow her to withdraw into the crowd, consoling himself, however, with a fixed determination of finding some substantial means before long of proving to this most eccentric but worthy individual how very highly he esteemed the service she had rendered him.

"Ha! ha! ha! here's a jolly fellow for a carnival."

"Hold, monsieur, a word in your ear. It is not the custom in this part of the country for people to come to masked balls in order to reflect over their sins."

"I say, though, what is it? Has your wife run away with a sapeur pompier?"

"Has the business gone to the deuce?"

"Has your rich aunt by the mother's side married again at seventy-two?"

"Come, bestir yourself, old boy, and have a dance. It is the best thing in the world for the spleen."

Trelane had got into another hornet's nest of mad masqueraders, who were now attacking him on all sides, indignant at the expression of his countenance, which very likely was not exactly suited to the kind of scene in which he found himself.

"Poor devil!" cried one of them, with really a

profound compassion for the man who could not understand the verb *se distraire*—"Poor devil! he can't help it. He is an Englishman, and they none of them know how to amuse themselves."

"Then they should stop at home, and be miserable in seclusion," roared a gentleman, humorously got-up as a skeleton. "Look at us; see what jolly dogs we are," and away he danced, flourishing his bones and grinning in a manner almost too horrible to behold.

Trelane felt that this cheerful personage was so far right as that he himself had no business in that place. So he withdrew as quickly and as quietly as he could, in order to avoid any more encounters with such gay companions as those he had just parted from; only too glad to get away from what was so utterly uncongenial to his present mood.

The hour was getting late, and the company, excited by their own violence and by wine, were fast advancing to a stage of revelry which approached the frantic. The ordinary succession of waltzes, polkas, and galops was interrupted by strange and savage dances invented by the performers themselves in the evil inspiration of the moment, and their horrible contortions and ungainly gestures would have seemed more appropriate in the camp of the King of Dahomey than in the principal theatre of a European capital.

Trelane hurried away from the scene in extremest

disgust, but it took him a long time to make his way through the crowd, and even when he had reached the lobbies and passages which led out of the building, the sounds of the revel still followed him, echoing along the corridors in noisy discordance.

The adventures of the evening were not even now quite over. Trelane passed out of the ball-room into the part of the theatre devoted to the use of the spectators. He was on his way out of the building, thoroughly tired of the noise and the light, and the glittering sadness of the scene, and was walking along one of the lobbies in that state of abstraction into which we are all liable to fall at seasons of great fatigue, and when the observing faculties are thoroughly exhausted, when he was suddenly "brought up," as the saying goes, by some person stopping directly in front of him. He looked up quickly, and found that this individual was no other than the ingenuous Monsieur Tronchet.

Trelane paused for a moment, and was about to pass on with a distant salutation. He had no desire for an interview with this man, and that pause even for a moment at their first meeting was only occasioned by the natural surprise which Trelane felt at seeing the lieutenant in Brussels. "Wherever *she* is," thought our Englishman, "this man is to be found." And, curiously enough, exactly the same thought passed through the mind of Lieutenant Tronchet. Trelane was passing on after that cold

salutation, and wearing an expression of countenance which indicated no great amount of affection for the gallant Tronchet, but this last seemed to be for a parley.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said the lieutenant, "but if it is not disagreeable to you, I would ask for a few moments of your time."

"It is late, monsieur," replied Trelane, haughtily, "and I must ask you to be as brief in what you have to say as you conveniently can."

"I will come to the point at once," said the lieutenant, "having no more wish to prolong this interview than you have. Monsieur, I have some reason to think that I can guess at the motive which has brought you at this time to Brussels."

Trelane chafed a little at this, but he did not speak.

"Monsieur," continued the lieutenant, "I will ask you plainly, is not your presence in Brussels attributable to the fact that Madame d'Elmar and her niece are staying in the town?"

"Monsieur," answered Trelane, "since you are for talking plainly, I will tell you in so many words that I neither recognize your right to speak to me of those ladies whom you have just mentioned, nor to inquire into the motives of one who is, and wishes to remain, a stranger to you."

"And yet," urged the lieutenant, whose countenance had, as was its habit in moments of emotion,

assumed a pale green tint hideous to behold—"and yet I have in this case a right to interfere which cannot be questioned."

"I fancy I shall be disposed to question it, nevertheless," said Trelane, quietly.

"Monsieur," continued the lieutenant, "I am here as the representative of Monsieur le Capitaine d'Elmar."

"And what may that have to do with your investigations into the motives which govern my actions?" demanded Trelane.

"Much," replied the lieutenant. "My friend, Alexis d'Elmar, is the natural adviser and guide of his charming niece."

It was impossible for our Englishman to repress a gesture of impatience at that word "charming." He restrained himself, however.

"You will pardon me," he said; "but it seems to me that that is rather the function of the young lady's aunt. Is le Capitaine d'Elmar the legal guardian of his niece, as you call Mademoiselle d'Elmar?"

"Monsieur," replied Tronchet, in an evasive manner, "he is not precisely her guardian as appointed by law, but he is the trustee and residuary legatee of his late brother, who was as a father to mademoiselle, and since that brother's decease he has always been looked up to as a sort of head to the family; his advice has always been adopted by

Madame d'Elmar, and his word has been law, both to her and to her niece."

Trelane made no reply, and the lieutenant went on:

"Prevented by illness from being himself on the spot, le Capitaine d'Elmar has, as I said before, invested me with his authority and deputed me to act for him in all matters that concern his niece. So now, monsieur, I trust that you will no longer question my right to interfere."

"On the contrary," replied our Englishman, "as I entirely question the authority of le Capitaine d'Elmar himself in this matter, it is hardly probable that I should regard it when presented to me at second hand."

Lieutenant Tronchet turned greener than before.

"By your own showing," Trelane went on, "your friend has no recognizable claim whatever on Miss d'Elmar's allegiance."

"'Recognizable' or not," retorted Tronchet, mysteriously, "he *has* a claim, and one which I suspect you will find it desirable to acknowledge."

"I have nothing to do with mysterious hints," said the Englishman. "I can neither listen to them nor be guided by them. So, as it is useless to prolong this conversation, we will now, if you please, go our respective ways." And Trelane actually prepared to move off.

"Stop," cried the lieutenant, compelled to play his last card, the card which he had treasured up as

a very ace of trumps. "One moment more. You object to mystery, as you call it. I will speak more plainly."

"Speak plainly," said a strange voice. "Speak plainly with a face like that. Ya, ha! take my mask, old fellow, and you may get believed, perhaps."

It was a Polichinello who spoke, skipping and hopping along with grotesque grimaces. He had caught these two words of the lieutenant's as he passed, and echoed them. He was gone in another moment; but the incident was disconcerting.

"I suppose," said Monsieur Tronchet, as soon as he could collect his ideas after this interruption—"I suppose you are aware that the deceased Monsieur d'Elmar bequeathed a certain sum of money to his wife's niece, and that it is left in the hands of le Capitaine d'Elmar in his capacity of trustee."

"I am aware of nothing of the sort. Nor do I see how this concerns me," replied Trelane.

Monsieur Tronchet smiled at this. It was really a little too much to ask of his credulity.

"Stop a moment," he continued. "The whole of this sum of which I speak passes away from Mademoiselle d'Elmar, in the event of her marrying contrary to the captain's wish. Mark me, it goes away from her and lapses to the estate, or, in other words, falls into the hands of the residuary legatee."

"Well, sir?" asked Trelane, calmly.

The lieutenant was absolutely bewildered. Here

was an individual evidently seeking the hand of a young lady; here was her *dot*—her dowry—that tremendously important element in a French marriage, trembling in the balance, and yet this man was, or pretended to be, entirely indifferent on the subject. Bah! It could not be. He must be shamming.

"You see," the lieutenant went on, "that it is not without reason that I said just now that my friend Alexis was invested with a certain authority over Mademoiselle d'Elmar, which it would be necessary to respect."

"Authority over her means, perhaps," answered Trelane; "but none over her person. I see nothing in what you have said that need curtail her liberty of action."

"Nothing?" retorted the other. "It gives to my friend, virtually, complete control over mademoiselle's matrimonial intentions. If mademoiselle marries a person obnoxious to her uncle, she does it at a sacrifice which few—few——"

"Few Frenchmen would be inclined to approve of," suggested Trelane.

"Ay, or Englishmen either," retorted the lieutenant.

"Well, we will not discuss that question," replied Trelane; "nor, with your permission, any other. Come, sir, you have gone as far as you can. You have tried to put every obstacle you could in the way of a thing which I hope and believe IS TO BE in

spite of you. You have just now, as I suspect, fired your last shot, and it has not told as you expected. I will, therefore, leave you to devise at your leisure any new expedients which your ingenuity may suggest, as calculated to support the authority which has been so generously delegated to you, by one who seems to me never to have possessed it himself."

Trelane bowed slightly as he spoke these last words, and, disregarding certain obscure menaces with which the lieutenant responded to his parting address, he walked slowly out of the theatre, leaving Monsieur Tronchet to amuse himself as best he might, during what yet remained of this somewhat protracted evening.

But the gallant lieutenant was in no mood for balls, masked or otherwise. He had been foiled. When Major Trelane stated his opinion that the lieutenant had fired his last shot, he conjectured quite truly. Monsieur Tronchet had fired his last shot, and it had missed. And now his ammunition was exhausted, and he was altogether destitute. He could not but see that his friend's power over his niece was entirely confined to her money, and here was this infernal Englishman professing a sublime indifference as to that part of the business. What evil influence, malignant, destructive of the lieutenant's hopes, ruinous to his fortunes, had brought this inevitable major to Versailles to upset everything? Those two ladies could never have stood alone with-

out this man's assistance. In the long run menaces would have told with the elder lady, and protracted persecution with the younger. But now the whole game was lost and spoiled, and Lieutenant Tronchet was the principal sufferer.

So this injured man, not feeling inclined to remain longer at the ball, went away to his lodings in the Rue de Namur, and occupied himself in writing a long and melancholy letter to his friend at Vincennes.

CHAPTER XV.

INVENI PORTUM.

And now a day had arrived which was to be one of those entirely critical and decisive days which most of us, in looking back at our lives, can count upon our fingers. It was a mild, genial day in late February—one of those with a hint of summer in them, which we all love—a day to throw open one's window and stand long beside it, drinking in the soft balmy air, and thinking hopefully of the future here—and hereafter.

I should be depicting a man of stone, however, and not Henry Trelane, if I said that he was on that particular morning in a humour to stand by a window and think. There had been a time for that before, there would be time for it again, but it could not be now.

For the day had arrived. The long-delayed morning had come at last. What a long time that yesterday, which kept to-day from arriving, had

lasted! However, it *had* given in, and this great "to-day" was here.

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon when Trelane turned aside into the Place du Musée. What a strange compound of feelings possessed him! What hope, what dread! Could it really be that she was there, that in a short time he might be standing face to face with her?

As Trelane drew quite near to the entrance of the house, almost hesitating now whether to approach it, the door opened, and a servant carrying a marketing basket on her arm came out. It was Victorine. She had not closed the door behind her, and at sight of Trelane she just uttered one cry of surprise and delight, and then, turning swiftly round, rushed back into the house without a word, leaving the door wide open. Trelane entered the house, but the bonne had disappeared entirely, though her footsteps were audible ascending the stone stairs in hottest haste. Presently our Englishman heard a sound of the rapid opening and shutting of doors upstairs, and then for a moment there was quiet.

There was some considerable delay before Trelane again heard the opening and shutting of the doors upstairs. Then Victorine descended the stairs as quickly as she had mounted them, and came to where Trelane stood, full of apologies for her unceremonious retreat.

"Is Madame d'Elmar well enough—will she see me?" asked Trelane, interrupting himself abruptly. He could not wait for any words of preamble.

"Monsieur," the girl replied, "I informed madame just now of your arrival. For some time she seemed to hesitate what to do; at last she sent Mademoiselle——"

"Mademoiselle d'Elmar is here, then?"

"Monsieur, of course she is here. Where else could she be?"

"Go on," said Trelane, impatiently, forgetful that he had himself interrupted the bonne's speech. "Pray go on."

"Well, monsieur, as I was saying, madame told her niece to remain for a little while in her own apartment, and then when mademoiselle had left the room, 'Tell Monsieur Trelane,' said madame, 'that if he will take the trouble to come up, I will see him for a time alone.'"

It has been said already, that those interviews which had taken place from time to time between Madame d'Elmar and Major Trelane were always characterised by a certain awkwardness and restraint. Now if this was the case before our Englishman knew who this lady really was, it seemed likely that an additional degree of embarrassment would be felt by both now that Trelane knew that this English lady was the sister of Rachel Pryor, that she must have known his dead brother,

and all the circumstances of his sad history. It was, then, with every anticipation of a painful meeting that Trelane mounted the stairs of the house in the Place du Musée. He was not rendered more himself by the thought that he was at this moment under the same roof with Madeleine.

Trelane entered a light and very cheerful room of good large dimensions, and overlooking the Place, and Madame d'Elmar rose from her seat near to the open stove to receive him. The same emaciated worn form, the same timid, spiritless face.

Her reception of her guest was kind—almost cordial. But there was that old shadow of a restraint—that indescribable something—which was destined after this very interview to disappear for ever.

Yes, for ever. On this day words were to be spoken which should banish the misgivings and doubts which had kept these two persons asunder. From this time, this timid lady should want no more for guidance and support. From this day, the lines were to be cast for her in pleasanter places, and the path along which she walked during the short term of life that remained to her was to be smoother and more even than any she had trodden yet.

It is needless to trouble the reader with the necessary words of commonplace which passed between the two persons now brought together again under

circumstances so remarkable. Such commonplaces were exchanged as were necessary and inevitable, and after a little they flagged; each felt that there was more to be said, and each felt a disinclination to begin. At last Trelane thought to himself that it was he who had sought that meeting, and that it behoved him to save this poor lady any suffering, great or small, from which it was possible to deliver her.

"Madame d'Elmar," he said, "ill and suffering as you are, I am half afraid that it must have cost you a great deal to consent to this interriew. No," he added, as the lady was about to speak, "you must not say otherwise," and with that he stopped himself, unable to pick and choose his words, and yet unwilling to speak bluntly or suddenly.

"Major Trelane," the lady said, faintly, "you have a right to my attention; you have claims on my warmest gratitude and regard."

"Even if I had any such," said Trelane, speaking hurriedly, "I should be sorry to presume on them. I have much to say that will no doubt surprise you, but it can be said in few words," here he stopped again.

Madame d'Elmar did not interrupt him, and he went on.

"Since I last saw you—now some months ago—it has happened that certain things which concern you, and me, and—your—and Miss d'Elmar, have

come to my knowledge, and that in the strangest manner."

Madame d'Elmar raised herself in her chair, and fixed her eyes earnestly on Trelane's face.

"Once since I saw you—only once, and then for but a short time—I have, as you doubtless know, seen Miss d'Elmar. Our interview was, as I have said, a short one—short and painful in the last degree. She spoke of some mystery, of some reason, which rendered it necessary that I should see her no more. What that reason was, I could by no persuasion or entreaty get from her. I misunderstood her altogether, and, misled besides by other circumstances which I had observed, and which seemed to receive confirmation at the very moment of our meeting, I believed that she had already given away her love, bestowing it, as I imagined, on a base and undeserving person."

Again the Englishman paused, but he was still not interrupted.

"This I believed for a time," he continued, "but now I know how much, how cruelly, I was mistaken. For now I know what that was which Madeleine's lips refused to tell me."

Madame d'Elmar remained lost in a stupor of astonishment.

"You cannot," at last she said, speaking very faintly.

"Yes," said the Englishman; "now I know ALL;

all that you have brooded on so long—all that has made your life so sad, and nearly ruined *hers*."

"Is this possible?" whispered the lady again.

"It is more—it is true; I know the story of her birth and of her life up to this time. Nay, more"—and here Trelane paused, and seemed to speak with difficulty—"I know of things that happened before her birth, and how she stands related to—to one whom I have been used to think of with angry thoughts."

"My sister?" faltered Madame d'Elmar.

"Your sister, who sinned and suffered."

How few words had been spoken by these two people; and yet what a difference those few words had made! At the beginning of this interview, but a dozen lines back, what a gulf was between them! in how short a time had it been bridged across!

Madame d'Elmar, unprepared for this interview, still more unprepared for what it had brought about, seemed almost unable to realize the meaning of Trelane's words, and sat for a time as one half stupefied.

"And you know all this," she said at last, "and, knowing it, are here?"

"And why should I not be here?" asked Trelane, simply.

They sat in silence for some time, and then Trelane spoke of Madeleine. He spoke of what the feeling was that had grown up within him, and gained

strength with every day that had passed since he had first seen her—a feeling not affected by absence, not weakened by many obstacles. And now that all those obstacles were overcome—now that nothing stood between him and Madeleine—he asked for a renewal of that intimacy which he had once enjoyed, asked that both Madame d'Elmar and her niece would look upon him as their protector and friend till that happy time came when Madeleine should call him by a prouder and dearer name.

"And her uncle?" interrupted Madame d'Elmar, timidly. "You speak of obstacles overcome, and you forget all about Alexis. The objections which he has always made to any intercourse taking place between Madeleine and you will be increased tenfold since that unhappy meeting at Versailles, the news of which has but lately reached us."

"And are you sure," asked Trelane, "that you do not greatly over-estimate the right of Monsieur d'Elmar to interfere in what concerns you and your niece alone?"

Madame d'Elmar shook her head. "He is my late husband's brother," she said. "Besides," added the lady, presently, "you are probably not aware that in one respect my brother-in-law has been endowed with a considerable authority over my niece."

"On the contrary," replied Trelane, "I know perfectly well to what you allude, and am only too

glad that his authority extends only to what is in this case a matter of so little moment."

Madame d'Elmar still hesitated. That old allegiance to the authority of Alexis d'Elmar was not to be immediately shaken off. She had been so long accustomed to his influence, so habituated to yield to him in everything, that the burden of his authority had ceased to weigh, and she almost dreaded the thought of its removal. The idea that Alexis had no real power over either her or her niece was one which she was slow to receive. And Trelane knew this, and knew that it must take some little time to accustom her to be in this particular matter something of a free-thinker.

There were three things, however, greatly in favour of the developing of some approach to a spirit of independence in this poor lady's character. She liked Trelane; she adored her niece, and desired her happiness beyond all earthly things; and she detested, as much as she could detest anybody or anything, Lieutenant Tronchet.

Trelane saw that Madame d'Elmar was sorely perplexed, and had need after the surprise occasioned by his visit for a little time in which to collect herself. He determined then to leave her for a while.

"I will return again," he said, "in the evening, if I may. In the meantime, I only ask you to communicate what has passed between us to Miss

d'Elmar, and to tell her that I know *all* that she shrank from telling me, and something more of which the time has not yet come to speak—and that with this knowledge—nay, all the more because of it—I love her." And the Englishman's voice faltered as he spoke these great and important words.

"Stop!" said Madame d'Elmar, as Trelane was leaving the room; "one question more. How has this knowledge of which you speak come to you?"

"You shall hear of that to-night," answered Trelane.

"You promise?"

"I promise."

Trelane stood again in the streets of Brussels. It was now the last day of the carnival. Lent would begin on the morrow, and everybody would be expected to plunge at once from excessive mirth into dire despondency and sorrow. So now, while still some licence remained, the people made the most of it.

Trelane had in the course of his travels seen carnivals to which this of Brussels was the merest child's play. He had seen the carnivals of Rome, of Naples, of Paris. But still it did seem to him that day that there was something about the small Brussels festival which was much more delightful than anything of the sort that he had known before. This Brussels carnival had been, and always would

be, a memorable thing to him, and he knew that he should always remember it with pleasure and kindly feeling. The town too, itself, he had always liked, but now he felt a tenfold affection for it, and its streets and places had for him a charm which was quite independent of their own intrinsic attractiveness.

There were on this last day more pretty children than ever in the shop windows, more Pierrots careering about the streets, the seedy carriages paraded up and down with more vigour, the proprietors of them showed more conscious dignity as they sat forward inside, the trumpets brayed more triumphantly, and altogether the carnival lamps blazed forth with all the greater brilliancy because it was certain that in a few short hours they would sputter out and be succeeded by Lenten darkness.

And now that Trelane had determined that nothing which he could control should separate him from Madeleine d'Elmar, there devolved upon him a duty which he could not approach without some feeling of reluctance. It was necessary, for Trelane abhorred the very thought of a clandestine act, that he should announce his intentions to his family in England. And this was, under the circumstances, a difficult thing to do. Not that Trelane's mother and sisters were difficult people to deal with. Far from it. There was love amongst them, and a huge proportion of that love fell to the share of Trelane. But it was

this very thing which increased his difficulties. Putting himself in their place, and remembering how, in their partiality, they would think nobody good enough for him, he feared lest some prejudice should take hold of them. He feared lest they should prejudge this stranger, lest they should talk of "poor, dear Henry!" and think that he had fallen a prey to some adventuress, who would make him miserable for life.

The thing must, however, be gone through with, and Trelane sat down to write; as he did so, he could not help thinking how his letter would be received, and what consternation it would cause. For some time he tried in vain to perform his task, but at last a thought came to him on which he determined to act.

Without any preamble, or what is ordinarily called "breaking the intelligence," he asked his mother to receive, for a short time, a young lady whose accepted suitor by the time that letter reached England he hoped to be. Of her history, of her family connections, he would say nothing then, except, what it was of course unnecessary to say, that her character, as well as her education and condition, fitted her to be the companion of his mother and sisters. He wished them to see her, and to know her before he told them who she was. If they grew to love her when she lived among them, as he hoped and believed they would, his most earnest wish and prayer would

be fulfilled; as to the other contingency, he would not write, or even think, of it. Any way, when they came once to know her well, her history should be told them.

Trelane added, that, at all events, the intercourse between his family and this new member of it must necessarily be short, for his leave would now soon be over, and after that his home, and that of his wife, would probably be for many a year to come in India.

This was the substance and the main drift of the letter which Trelane wrote, and we may anticipate so far as to record that, as swiftly as the post-office could do its work, the answers—long letters from his mother and sisters—came back. Letters full of love and kindness, but, as might be expected, full of fear and misgiving, too. They could trust their "darling Henry," they knew how true his judgment was, and how refined his taste. He need not have spoken what he did of his—his wife's fitness to associate with his own sisters; of course their Henry would ally himself with no one who was otherwise than fit to be his mother's guest. But—*but*, oh! they could not help being something more than anxious. It was his happiness they thought of. That, and that alone, was the cause of their fears. He had made a choice for life—how could those who loved him be otherwise than anxious? And then that mystery—was not that a thing to make them afraid? Why not tell

them all about her at once? These answers to Trelane's letter, however, did not arrive till three or four days after that with which we still have to do.

When Trelane went back that evening to the house in the Place du Musée, the first thing he learnt was that Lieutenant Tronchet had been there during his absence, and had been refused admittance by Madame d'Elmar's desire. This piece of intelligence was announced to him by Victorine with a certain degree of triumph and mystery, and it was altogether with a bearing at once triumphant and mysterious that she now showed Trelane into the salon, which was entirely empty, and, assuring him that he would not long be left alone, closed the door and departed. Once outside, the air of mystery was exchanged for a grin of immeasurable delight.

Trelane was kept waiting but a very short time, though to him it seemed several hours. At last he heard, as he stood by the open stove, weaving in imagination the designs on the tiles into a continuous pattern of his own, and listening with almost painful intensity, a door not far off open and close again, then a light footstep came along the passage, and then he seemed to hear or see nothing more, for suddenly Madeleine d'Elmar was there, in the room with him, and was nestling against his heart.

With scenes such as this, we have no business to meddle. What is said and done at such a time tells

to but poor advantage on paper. There are bitternesses which the heart of the sufferer alone knows, and joys with which the stranger may not intermeddle.

It was accomplished. At last these two were together. There were no more misunderstandings between them. That cruel parting at St. Amand was quite forgotten now, and every unhappy memory merged in the present joy.

It is a curious thing that we can spend so much time in dwelling on all the minute circumstances which lead up to such a meeting as this, but when the object to attain which all has been done is gained—when we arrive at last at that supreme moment towards which all the other moments have been tending—we are mute.

We have been toiling up a very high mountain, and have encountered all sorts of dangers, and obstacles, and hardships on the road. On all these we dwell at length, doing them the fullest justice of which we are capable; but when we get to the very topmost peak of all, when our task is achieved, and the promised land lies before us at last—behold we have nothing to say. "The Promised Land is beautiful," is all we can announce. "Henry Trelane and Madeleine d'Elmar are happy." That is all.

What have we to do in the room with those two persons? What to us would be their few half-

uttered words, their eloquent silence? Who are we that we should intrude while these two exchange their vows of love, while they revel in their present joy, enhancing it with memories of the wretched past, and looking on to a future better even than this glorious present itself? Into the room from which the nearest and dearest of relations are self-excluded, shall we dare to enter?

When Madame d'Elmar at last left her own apartment and went into the salon, one glance at Madeleine's face repaid her for all she had suffered in secret; for, to say the truth, this poor lady had been thinking, as she sat alone, of the parting which was likely to take place between her and her dear niece, and had shed many tears while she thought how natural, and at the same time how terrible, it was that at that very moment they had in some sort begun to be put asunder. Natural thoughts these for the poor, lonely lady, but to her they seemed supremely selfish, when, as has been said, she looked upon the girl's face, and saw what great contentment was written there. "*Inveni portum*—I have found the harbour," that face said, plainly. "I have come into the haven. I have been tossed hither and thither, and beaten backwards and forwards at the mercy of the winds and the waves, and at one time I even thought that my frail bark had foundered, and must go down altogether. But see, the cloud has

turned its silver lining to me, the great waters have gone down and ceased to rage, my little pinnace has come into a sheltered spot from which all peril is excluded. The flood-gates have closed behind and shut me in. It is over, and—I am safe."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LAST ORDEAL.

On a certain morning in March, we enter once more that wonderful laboratory in which that learned gentleman, Dr. Lebœuf, is, and has been for many a long year, engaged in the study of one of the noblest callings to which a wise man can devote himself.

Our dear old friend is seated, as usual, in his great arm-chair, in front of the huge bureau or escritoire, at which he is in the habit of writing his prescriptions. His appearance is just what it always has been since we have known him, and probably, considering his years, what it always will be to the end. There is the same inscrutable look about the man externally, and there is the same warm and affectionate heart kept entirely out of sight, and not allowed to assert its existence by any outward sign whatsoever. The doctor is busily engaged in mastering the contents of a big professional-looking pamphlet. It is, in fact, one of the last medical

brochures which has appeared at Paris, and Dr. Lebœuf, who always moves with the times, and is the first to welcome new discoveries and new views, is mightily busy with the work before him.

While he is thus engaged, a gentle tap is heard at the door, and immediately afterwards our valued friend, Monsieur Morlot, makes his appearance, more mysterious and solemn than ever. Monsieur Morlot carries in his hand a silver tray, on which is a cup of chocolate, smoking hot, a brioche or small roll, and a letter—a great large letter from abroad—that is to say, from England. It is a double letter, and has two stamps upon it.

The doctor is so intent upon his studies, that at first he takes no notice of the entry of his familiar spirit. He is in the very crisis of a case as described in the medical pamphlet, and Monsieur Morlot stands before him, tray in hand, for a time disregarded. At length, and without looking up, the doctor pats the table beside him two or three times, and says,—

"Set it down, set it down; I can't take it just now."

"Monsieur," says Jacques Morlot, "there is a letter as well."

"A letter!" replies the doctor, looking up at his familiar, over the top of his spectacles.

"Yes, Monsieur le Docteur, a foreign letter—from England, in fact," continued the adept, after examining the post-mark.

"From England?" asked the doctor, putting down his pamphlet, introducing, however, the paper-knife between the leaves, as a marker. "From England? Why, it must be from my old patient, Monsieur Trelane." And he took up the letter and glanced at the handwriting, by which his hypothesis was at once confirmed.

Monsieur Morlot appeared to be greatly interested on hearing from whom the letter came. The Englishman had been a great favourite with him from the first.

"Perhaps he wants you to take another journey on horseback with him," said the doctor, glancing at his servant with a humorous twinkle.

"Heaven forbid!" gasped Monsieur Morlot, piously.

"Well, we will see," said the physician, breaking the seal and glancing at the contents of the letter.

Monsieur Morlot placed the chocolate close to the doctor's side, and was preparing reluctantly to leave the room, when his master called to him.

"Stop!" said the learned gentleman; "your eyes are a great deal better than mine, and these Englishmen write such extraordinary hands that there is no making them out. I think I must get you to read the letter to me aloud."

Monsieur Morlot desired nothing better. So he put down his empty tray, and, advancing to where his master sat, received the letter from him, and,

standing by the side of the great escritoire, prepared to execute his task. The letter was, of course, in the French language, but we have not had our six lessons of a "native with the true Parisian accent" for nothing, and are capable of translating it.

"Stop!" said the doctor, as Monsieur Morlot was about to begin; "what are you standing for?"

"Monsieur le Docteur, it is my place."

"Stuff and nonsense!" the physician jerked out. "Go out of your place, then, and sit down."

Monsieur Morlot did as he was told, and seating himself at a little distance began to read.

"MY DEAR PHYSICIAN,—

"I HOPE and believe that I am not too sanguine in thinking that you will like to hear the end of a story in which you yourself have played a prominent part. Indeed, I should almost feel that something was wanting in the completeness of my content, if you, my dear doctor, did not share it. You, whose skill and patience I have tested so surely, and whose kindness and unselfishness——"

"Bah!" cried the doctor, "you mustn't read that, the gentleman is mistaken—entirely mistaken! you can skip a little just there."

"Pardon, Monsieur le Docteur, I am unable to skip—if I am to skip I must leave off altogether."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and Monsieur Morlot went on:

"—— whose kindness and unselfishness have won not only the warmest regard that I have to give, but that of somebody in whom I think you take more interest than even in your old patient Henry Trelane.

"Your young friend, Mademoiselle Madeleine, talks of you continually, and never but in terms of deep affection."

"A dear young lady—a dear young lady," muttered the doctor.

"I believe I am beginning my letter with what ought to come at the end of it; so now the best thing I can do is to start afresh and tell you something of what has happened since last we communicated with each other. And first of all I believe you know already much of what took place at Brussels—how Monsieur Tronchet, acting for his friend, Alexis d'Elmar, moved heaven and earth in his last desperate attempts to get poor Madame d'Elmar and Madeleine into his clutches, and how at length Alexis was driven to play his last card and show the real weakness of his hand in doing so. Madeleine, with his consent, should marry no one but his friend, Lieutenant Tronchet. If she made any other choice, he exercised his right of sequestrating her dowry."

Monsieur Morlot left off at this point to solace himself with a pinch of snuff.

"Peste!" he grumbled, in the intervals of snuffing up the fragrant powder, "an awkward thing for our patient, Monsieur le Docteur."

"Not a bit, not a bit," replied his master. "These English are all millionnaires; they have more money than they know what to do with."

Monsieur Morlot went on reading.

"Here, then, was at once the strength and the weakness of our enemy displayed before us. To him and to his agent, Tronchet, this last coup evidently appeared final. To *us*, as showing the utmost that this man had it in his power to do, this act of d'Elmar's was an absolute relief. He had done his worst, and yet Madeleine was free.

"The greatest difficulty now was with Madame d'Elmar. This poor lady, who, as you know better than I do, is a great bodily sufferer, and is also nervous and timid in the last degree, has been so long accustomed to obey her brother-in-law that to persuade her to what she seemed to consider an act of revolt was no easy task, and had it been possible for Alexis to have still exercised a personal influence over her—I mean could he have been himself present at Brussels—I know not that she would ever have had the strength to resist him. The illness which kept him at Vincennes, making it necessary that he should be represented by his friend Monsieur Tronchet, was very much in favour of Madame d'Elmar's emancipation from the tyranny of her brother-in-law."

The slightest medical allusion was as certain to lead Monsieur Morlot astray as any mention of

fortifications was to start my uncle Toby on his favourite hobby.

"Ah," remarked the veteran, "illness indeed! a bad subject, that Capitaine d'Elmar."

"Not so bad as you think," responded his master. "Eats and drinks too much, I suspect; with proper care may go on for years, with the right medical treatment at first, of course."

"Ah, monsieur, if *we* had the case in hand, I don't say."

"Well, Morlot, we haven't it in hand, and are not likely to have it, so get on with the letter."

"Well," Monsieur Morlot resumed, "at length the poor lady was in some sort induced to see things in a different light, and I do believe that it was a most painful revelation to her when first the conduct of her brother-in-law began to wear a doubtful look in her eyes. The mind's habits are as difficult to change after a certain time of life as the body's. And there was another change to which Madame d'Elmar had now to reconcile herself, which must have been a sad one to look forward to—the loss of the continual companionship of her darling Madeleine, who has been for so many years as a daughter to her. This loss shall, however, be softened to her as much as circumstances will admit of.

"And so Alexis d'Elmar, having done his worst to hinder us in vain, and Madame d'Elmar having determined to sacrifice everything to her niece's

happiness, the day came when we found ourselves with our backs turned to Brussels, and on the road to England—after all, the real fatherland of all three—but whose soil one of the party had not trodden for twenty years, while another had never touched its shores at all. We travelled by easy stages, and it had been arranged that Madame d'Elmar was to remain in London with Victorine, who was, of course, of the party, while Madeleine and I—it being only a day's journey—were to go on to the old house in Devonshire which had hitherto been my home.

"A terrible ordeal this, you will say, for poor Madeleine, and indeed it was felt to be so by every one of us. That dear recluse, who had passed her life so completely out of the world, who knew neither her own country nor its people, was now to be thrown among those who were to her entire strangers; and, although I knew that she would be met with no cold scrutiny and critical examination, yet it was not possible to put the fear and shyness which naturally possessed her out of her mind, or to make this other than a very severe trial for this dear child. And yet she wished to go, seeing how right and natural a thing it was to do so, and how undignified a course it would have been to have become connected with this family in what might be called a clandestine manner, without even knowing those to whom she was to be so closely related.

"Quite right, quite right," muttered Doctor Lebœuf at this juncture. "Couldn't do it furtively—no, no."

"You remember," continued Monsieur Morlot, as he resumed his reading after another pinch of snuff—"you remember that I mentioned to you my having made a request that Madeleine's history might remain a secret to those among whom she was going till they had had the opportunity of associating with her personally and forming an unbiassed opinion of her nature, for I felt that, when they came to know her and love her, they would receive the strange revelation with something in their hearts which would deprive it of a great deal of its painfulness. Come what might of this visit, my own mind was, I need not say, made up with regard to Madeleine; only in the event—which, however, I could not for a moment contemplate—of any prejudice operating to the disadvantage of my dear companion, I had resolved that she should never suffer for it, and that we should be in future as much away from England as was at all possible.

"It would be to little purpose, my dear doctor, that I should introduce to you, at this time, persons with whom I fear you are never likely to come in contact, and places which I am afraid you will never visit—though if you did take a fancy to run over to our old house in England, I can tell you that you would find your fame had preceded you, and that your welcome would be a warm one."

"Very kind," interrupted the doctor, "very kind, indeed. But it's too late now," he added, with a sigh, "too late to make new acquaintances—make acquaintance with the worms underground soon."

"Bah!" cried the other, in a tone of indignation. "What right has monsieur to speak of such things? With careful diet and an occasional dose of carb——"

"Enough, Morlot, enough. What do you know about it? Go on with your reading—I want to hear how the poor young lady got on."

"I will only tell you then," Monsieur Morlot read, "that our house is situated in a very lovely country—one of the most beautiful parts, in fact, of a certain island kingdom of which I am not a little proud—and I will further mention that the house aforesaid is of redbrick and is very comfortable, although at least a couple of centuries old. It is inhabited, first of all, by my father, an old gentleman of seventy-two, nominally the head of the family, but having virtually abdicated in favour of one of my brothers who has always lived at home and managed the estate, and who is altogether a sportsman and farmer, and nothing else. My mother, who is three years my father's junior, and who was married to him at eighteen—their golden marriage was celebrated a year ago—is a perfect creature, I believe, if ever there was one in this world, and, as I was always a great favourite with her, I was most anxious that my dear Madeleine might win her love at any rate.

For my sisters: the eldest lives at home and relieves my mother of all sorts of housekeeping cares; the second, not in order of birth, for two married sisters come between her and the eldest—the second *at home*, —her name is Mary—is what you call rather *dévote*, but is really the incarnation of kindness and mercy. She has delicate health and is slightly deformed."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" sighed Monsieur Morlot, pausing again for snuff and appearing to relish this part of the letter exceedingly, "it always tells on the health, that deformity. Presses on the organs, monsieur. Hein?"

"Not always," replied the master. "I knew a case in which the vertebral column was so twisted that one would have said that the smaller ribs on one side must actually have pressed upon the main substance of the liver, yet that individual was singularly healthy."

"C'est égal," persisted the other. "Nothing shall ever persuade me—no, not even monsieur himself—that the osseous cage which envelopes all the different organs can be twisted and distorted without ——"

"Silence, you conceited brigand!" roared the doctor, "and go on."

"Ah, it won't do, won't do at all," muttered the spoiled old fellow. But he went on reading all the same.

"My youngest sister completes our family group. Amy is just a year younger than I am, and we used

to be great comrades and playfellows as children. About her alone I was, I own, uneasy, fearing some development of that strange kind of jealousy which has so much discomfort and wretchedness to answer for—I mean that I was afraid that she would look upon herself as turned out of her old place in my affections by Madeleine—think her unworthy of me, or some such nonsense.

"Here, then, is a rough sketch of the household of which Miss d'Elmar was to become a member. We arrived at rather a late hour, and by the time that Madeleine had exchanged affectionate greetings with my mother and sisters, it was time to prepare for dinner. Nothing could exceed the cordiality of that first reception. There was no word of introduction or any formality whatsoever. Madeleine was received as one whom I had pronounced worthy to be an honoured guest. I can hardly say how grateful I was for the delicate kindness which caused my mother and sisters to repress all signs of curiosity and what we English call 'fuss' at that very trying moment.

"Our daily meals are valuable in other ways than as ministering to the needs of nature. They have a great social value, and the periods of their regular recurrence often help us out of some of those minor social difficulties which may not be treated altogether as trifles. If, after the first meeting, we had all had to sit down together with nothing to do, we

should inevitably have felt awkward and constrained. As it was, we were all obliged to separate to go to our respective rooms, and then came dinner itself—a process to go through—something to do.

"Madeleine sat next my father. I suppose he knew that she was a stranger, and that he had some idea that she was one day to be a member of his family, but he was so much occupied in discussing with my brother what was to be done with some half-bred colts which were just about to come up from grass, that everything else appeared to be banished from his mind. It is true that he did once appeal to his neighbour for her opinion as to whether it would not be a more judicious course to keep the colts another year and sell them at a fair price, than to let them go at the next horse-fair for what they would fetch; and it is also a fact that my brother, noticing Madeleine's perplexity, informed her that 'they were a seedy lot, nasty leggy weeds as she would see anywhere, and that the first loss on brutes of that sort was the best.' I am afraid poor Madeleine came very ill out of this conversation and lost the good opinion of my father and my brother John for ever. Lucky, that my eldest sister—dear, clever, well-informed woman, as she is—sat next Madeleine on the other side, and a more congenial companion and one more easy to get on with no one could desire.

The talk between them did not flag, and I blessed my dear old sister Anne, fervently though silently, as I sat nervously watching all that went on from the other side of the table. I was on one side of my dear mother, and our old clergyman was on the other. In the scheme so mercifully concocted by my mother and Anne for making this first meeting as little awkward as possible for Madeleine, this excellent old man had been asked to dinner, and so we were not entirely a family party.

"My dear doctor, what *am* I doing? I am going on as if it were my purpose to write, for your benefit, the whole annals and history of the Trelane family—people whom, as I said before, you have never seen, and are never, I fear, likely to see. I hardly know what has put it into my head that these details will interest you, but the idea has got there and may not be dislodged. I will, however, be as brief as I can, and tell you that both the dinner, and the evening that succeeded it, passed off better than in my most sanguine moments I could have imagined possible. There was, indeed, but one approach even to a drawback, and that was exactly what I had from the first foreseen. My youngest sister Amy——"

"Ah-h-h-h!" sighed Monsieur Morlot, with that peculiar long-drawn breath by which French audiences at the theatre are wont to express their interest in a crisis.

"Queer creatures—they're very queer creatures," remarked the doctor, in allusion, it may be supposed, to the sex which this young lady represented.

"My sister Amy," Monsieur Morlot continued, "betrayed, though in no way that could have been detected by a less morbidly acute observer than I was, a certain something—a sort of faint soupçon of a mixed curiosity and doubt, which made it evident to me that Madeleine would have more difficulty in winning her love than that of my two other sisters. It was not that there had been any want of warmth and cordiality in Amy's reception of our guest; not that she neglected her, or failed to do fully her part in the honours of the house. It was nothing that could have been complained of, or even, as I have said, by most people remarked; but still the *something* was there. I think that I found her now and then watching Madeleine while she was talking to my mother or my other sisters. I think that, after doing so for a while, she would become a little bit *distraite*, and would then perhaps take to watching me a little in turn. And, also, she was not so resolved as the others to keep the conversation away from family topics and matters from which Madeleine might perhaps feel herself in some sort shut out. Now all these were small things, you will say—very small things. Still I noticed them, and they troubled me a little, I own. I had, however, one source of comfort which I cannot forbear mentioning, and this

you will be able in some degree to appreciate. I could not help feeling the greatest satisfaction in observing that Miss d'Elmar, though naturally at such a time timid and nervous in no ordinary degree, showed such a perfection of good breeding, and was so entirely and instinctively an English lady, that the statement of her worthiness to which I had pledged myself was, as it were, endorsed, or corroborated, by every one of her words and actions. And I could see, moreover, that there was no single member of my family—no, not even my sister Amy—but felt this as much as I did, and owned the stranger for their fit associate and companion. What a sensation, I thought to myself, it must be for a man who has married a woman beneath him in station, to see her among the members of his own family committing some outrage against good breeding in her every movement!"

Monsieur Morlot left off, and, taking off his spectacles to wipe them, delivered himself to the following purpose,—

"My own marriage was something of a case in point. My father was a huissier at Grenoble, and the present Henrietta Morlot, née Pilyser, was only a dressmaker's girl, so that when she was introduced into the family of the Morlots, she was looked upon as compromising, and beneath the family standard in morals. Bah! it was vexatious," continued Monsieur Morlot, taking a pinch of snuff; "but since

then I have formed her tone, and have cause to be proud of my success."

"And that being the case," remarked the doctor, "perhaps you will be kind enough to go on with your reading, the anecdote just mentioned, though in itself intensely interesting, being an interruption."

"Bah! it was illustrative," argued Morlot, and then he read on.

"I felt then immense comfort in the exquisite modesty and gracefulness of Madeleine's bearing, and in observing that it was not lost on those whom I earnestly desired that she should impress favourably.

"It was my idea that I ought to leave Madeleine as often as possible alone with my family, believing that this was the surest way to make them get on together. And I found this plan to answer, always observing when I returned after a short absence that there seemed to be an increased familiarity between them. I suspect that they found one subject in common in talking about me, being all deluded into a belief that I am good for something. It is impossible to cure them of this delusion. You and I, doctor, understand these things better."

"Nobody knows how bad a man is, or how good. Probably not even the individual himself," remarked the doctor, sententiously.

"At any rate," Monsieur Morlot read on, "they seemed to find subjects in common of some sort or other, though there was still about my youngest

sister that indefinable restraint of which I have before spoken. I was, however, now satisfied, and more than satisfied, with the impression which Madeleine had made, and the day—long put off—was at hand when I determined to reveal the story of her birth."

Monsieur Morlot again gave vent to a long-drawn breath, indicative of profound interest, and went on.

"My brother John and I are, I think I may say without going too far, tolerably intimate acquaintances; so, as that vexed question about the colts and their destiny, which has already been referred to, had not yet been finally settled, I agreed one day to ride over with him to the paddocks, where they were turned out, and give my opinion on the momentous subject. The paddocks where these animals were at grass was at some considerable distance from our house, and our undertaking was likely to cut well into the day. What with the time given to luncheon, and to inspecting the colts, and what was consumed on the road, we were out from about half-past nine in the morning till five in the afternoon.

"During our ride home, I am afraid that John must have found me but an indifferent companion, for, while he was entertaining me with a long account of a grand affray between the gamekeepers and a gang of poachers which had taken place in the course of the winter, and in which he had himself

taken part, I was occupied entirely with a certain subject of my own which had laid hold of my attention, and in which I was so much absorbed, that I could only answer 'yes' and 'no' at intervals when my brother seemed to expect me to say something. In short, I was thinking of that revelation which I was going to make, and turning over in my mind all the different ways in which the thing might be done. It ended in my coming to the determination that I would speak on the subject that very afternoon. I could see that Madeleine had already made great way in winning the affection of my mother and sisters; it remained to see whether that affection would survive when they should be informed that the object of it was the daughter of the woman who had been looked upon always as little better than the murderess of my brother Alfred. You will easily believe, my dear doctor, that such thoughts as these made me a bad companion to my sporting brother, and kept me in a very fever of anxiety to get home, and speak what I had to say.

"When we got to the house I jumped off my horse almost before he had stopped, and, resisting John's offer to show me some Setter pups as a sort of companion picture to the colts we had just visited, I hastened into the house, and, going upstairs at once, knocked at the door of my mother's room. My dear mother and my eldest sister were sitting there together;

my mother knitting by the fire, the picture of what a fine old lady ought to be, enjoying the peaceful decline of a well-spent life. My sister was at the writing-table; she had just finished some letters, and presently the servant came in to take them away in the bag.

"'Where is Mary?' I asked.

"'She is in the village looking after her poor people.'

"'And Amy,' I said, 'and Madeleine?'

"'Amy has taken her out in the pony-chaise for a long drive,' said Anne.

"I thought this well done of Amy and that she was trying to overcome her little feeling of prejudice and mistrust.

"Dear Doctor Lebœuf, I must tell you all about this scene. I went to the fireplace and sat down near to my mother's chair. Her knitting was in very long strips, such as are, I believe, sown together at last so as to make a striped quilt. I got hold of the end of the long strip and began rolling and unrolling it; my hands so employed I could speak. I turned to my mother and asked her without any preparation 'how she liked Madeleine d'Elmar?'

"My mother appeared to see in a moment that something was coming. She let her knitting fall into her lap and turned towards me.

"'Henry,' she said, 'I cannot help liking her, so far as I have seen.'

"'And you, Anne?'

"'She is a dear sweet girl,' said my eldest sister, heartily; 'but oh, Henry, if ——' and she stopped abruptly.

"'If,' I said, speaking slowly—'if you might know all about her?'

"Neither my mother nor my sister spoke, but it was easy to see, by their fixed faces and earnest attitudes, what they wished and what they expected.

"'Mother,' I said, 'you have no recollection of this name of d'Elmar?'

"'No,' said my mother, slowly taxing her memory, 'I have none; but Anne has been telling me that she seems to remember having heard it long ago.'

"'You remember it?' I asked, turning to my sister.

"'No, not remember it properly. I only appear to have heard it at some time or other, though to whom applied I have no sort of idea.'

"'And yet you might have known the name,' I said. 'You must both have heard it.' And then I stopped. This was not the way to approach the thing. There was no way of approaching it by degrees. I thought I would try another way, so I spoke to my mother once again.

"'Anne told me in one of her letters that you had lately been thinking a great deal about that old subject which we have talked of so often—about poor Alfred,' I added in explanation.

"'Ah, yes, my dear,' said my mother, 'the thought of him has been with me a great deal lately. But, Henry, just now—why do you not go on with what you were beginning to tell us?'

"I saw my sister change her position suddenly. She looked at me more eagerly than before. I spoke again.

"'Mother, I *am* going on with what I began to tell you.'

"'Then why do you talk about my poor Alfred?'

"'Henry,' said my sister, speaking very quietly, 'has what you have to tell us any connection with that—with Alfred?'

"After a moment's silence I said, in a voice I hardly knew for mine, 'It has.'

"My sister spoke again, for my mother seemed turned to stone.

"'Tell me,' cried Anne, 'what is it you have to say? She is not—Madeleine is not—one of that race. Stay,' she said, suddenly recollecting herself, 'I remember now—I remember it all. That name of d'Elmar, it was the name of—of that woman's sister. Henry can it be? Why Madeleine must be the niece of wicked Rachel Pryor.'

"'SHE IS HER DAUGHTER.'

"I had said it, and I went on, 'She is her daughter by her marriage with the Italian Francesco Salvi, but a purer or more heavenly mind than hers dwells in no creature that walks this earth.'

"The stillness of the room, when it had ceased to echo these words of mine, was something more than passive. My mother was past the days of passionate emotion. She had uttered one faint cry as the truth burst in upon her. Now she only bent her head forward, and put one hand before her eyes. The other lay upon her black apron, and when I took it in mine, it seemed almost inanimate. My sister, still sitting before the little writing-table with one elbow resting on it, and her hands tightly clasped together, looked from the window on the scene outside, with eyes that saw neither the bare spring trees, nor the clouds that had gathered about the glorious sunset, nor knew that all was darkening in the gathering twilight.

"Presently she turned, and hastily rising and moving to where my mother sat, she put her arms about her, and nursed the head that had so often bent over hers in the days gone by.

"I rose from my seat, and, walking to the window, stood there for a time, silent and motionless. Then I thought that, perhaps, it would be better if my mother and sister were left for a time alone, so I went out of the room by a side door communicating with the back staircase, and so gained the open air. There was a little trout stream running through the grounds, and close to the front of the house, and I went and sat on the rustic bridge which led across it to the flower-garden. It was a mild

evening in March—one of those evenings which might just as well belong to autumn as to spring. At both these seasons of the year, there are days singularly the same in temperature and general aspect.

"I sat on the wooden parapet of the bridge, listening to the wind sighing in the trees near the house, and watching the small trout darting in and out among the long swaying weeds that waved backwards and forwards under the water. And sometimes I looked towards the house itself, and up at the windows of the room which I had just left. The light was beginning to fail so much, that I could see the flicker of the fire inside the apartment. Presently I saw my sister Mary with her basket, coming back from her village visits. She did not see me, and went into the house. Then there was an interval, and then I heard the sound of wheels in the distance, and by-and-by my youngest sister's pony-chaise appeared coming towards me along the sweep. My sister Amy saw me, and pulling hastily up, left the ponies to the care of the lad, and came hastily to where I stood. Madeleine remained seated in the carriage.

"As my sister drew nearer to me, I saw by her face that something had happened, and that she had been, in some way, much moved. Indeed, I could detect the traces of recent tears, and yet her expression was not a sorrowful one. She came to

me in haste, and putting her arm round my neck, kissed the scar upon my cheek. Then I saw again that her eyes were full of tears.

"'Why, Amy,' I asked, 'what is this? what has happened?'

"'Oh, Henry, I love her so now; but why—did you not tell us——?'

"'Tell you what?'

"'Henry, she has told me everything—everything—while we were out to-day. And now I *do* love her, as I never thought I should.'

"I was entirely overwhelmed by these words of my sister's. I looked round to where Madeleine still sat in her seat in the carriage. She was watching us as we talked.

"'But how did it happen?' I asked.

"'Oh, never mind how,' said my sister, quickly. 'I hardly know; I said something, I believe, which pleased her, and then she waited a little, and at last she said she could not help thinking that there was a restraint between us, and that I could not like her; and after that I don't know what happened, but I know that we got out of the pony-chaise, and sat down under some trees in a sunny place, and there she told me all—all about her unhappy birth, and that strange connection of her family with ours, once so near to being brought about, and then she told me about her uncle and Lieutenant—Lieutenant——'

"'Tronchet,' I suggested.

"'Yes, and about that dreadful man who turned out to be her father; and then—she spoke about you, and about this' (touching my cheek again), 'and about your long illness—you dear old thing.' At this point my sister leant her head against my shoulder, and began to sob outright. At length a thought seemed to strike her suddenly. She stopped her tears, and said, looking up in my face,—

"'But, Henry, what is to be done about mamma—how is it to be broken to her? And Anne—they both remember all that dreadful time so well.'

"'They both know,' I answered.

"'Oh, Henry, and you never told *me*—your old friend.'

"'It is only a quarter of an hour since that I spoke to them. I should have told you on your return, any way.'

"My sister was eager to learn how my mother and my eldest sister had borne what I had revealed to them, and she left me by my request, and went into the house to learn what was passing there. I went to Madeleine, where she still sat in the pony-chaise, and, taking her hand, thanked her for that confidence which she had made to my youngest sister. Then she got out of the carriage, and she and I together walked up and down in front of the house; and a strange peace and happiness seemed to have possession of us both.

"After a very short time, my youngest sister came out of the house to where we were, and just asking Madeleine if she would go with her to mamma, drew her away, and they both went into the house together."

Monsieur Morlot paused at this period of his reading, to take breath, but neither master nor servant spoke a word, and very soon the latter, after glancing at the small amount of writing which remained for him to decipher, went on to the end.

"My dear doctor, I have no more to tell. At that interview between Madeleine and my mother there was, I believe, but little said. What words were spoken, were words of sympathy for what Madeleine had suffered, but none that could make her feel that her loving reception was a thing which she must look upon as a favour conferred. The love that was to be hers was given freely; it was no slowly accorded concession, doled out with an unwilling hand. She was one of us. The struggle had been made in secret, while I sat upon the bridge and waited. What took place at that time between my mother and my eldest sister, I have never inquired, and over such things it is well sometimes to draw the veil. The issue of it was enough. It brought happiness to Madeleine and to me.

"So ends the story, the beginning and middle of which are so well known to you already. Madeleine

and I are together, to be, I fondly hope, parted no more. On a certain day next week, a ceremony is to be performed in our little village church, which will enable us to defy all the Tronchets and d'Elmars in creation, and which will give my dear Madeleine a protector for ever.

"I have now only to tell you that very soon I hope to have the great pleasure of talking to you face to face. Immediately after our marriage we propose to start on our voyage to India, doing the journey, however, by easy stages. We shall join Madame d'Elmar in London, where she awaits us. She has been kept acquainted with everything that has passed here, but has resolutely refused to come to the house though most cordially invited by my mother herself. Perhaps she is right. It is too much to expect of her, after being shut up so long, that she should break through her habits of retirement and come among strangers—worse than strangers, too, to her, for my mother and my eldest sister had been slightly known to her in painful days gone by. We join her then in London, and shall all travel together to Paris, and then to Versailles. To that place Madame d'Elmar has become powerfully attached, and there, under the care of her old attendant Victorine, she will continue to live in the old apartments which it is fortunate that I was able to secure. The parting between the aunt and niece will, I am afraid, be a sad one, and Madeleine accuses herself

of selfishness in leaving her. We shall remain to the full extent of time which my leave will admit of, at Versailles, in order to soften this parting to her as much as possible. I know one person at Versailles, at any rate, who will look after her when we are gone.

"And now as we are to meet, I hope, so soon, I will bring this outrageously long letter to a close. I am very sorry if it has bored you, but if it has, you have only yourself to blame for it: the interest which you have always shown in the strange chain of events which seems from the first to have linked my destiny with that of Madeleine d'Elmar, having emboldened me to trouble you with this last act of the drama.

"My mother and sisters, and especially my youngest sister, Amy, who is partly guilty of instigating me to the writing of this letter, desire me to send you the expression of their most grateful love; and I am, my dear doctor,

"Always affectionately yours,

"HENRY TRELANE."

"P.S.—I hope you will remember me very kindly to Monsieur Morlot, and tell him that if he should feel tired of your service, and anxious for a more changeful life, there is an opening for him in the family of an English officer returning to India, the said officer being in a position to offer him a highly

adventurous career, with many chances of exercising his medical skill, abundant opportunities for the use of his leeches, and, above all, plenty of horse-exercise."

There was a pause of some duration after Monsieur Morlot had finished his reading.

"The chain of events which has brought all this about," said the doctor, at last, "is, as the Englishman says, a sufficiently remarkable one.—Well, Morlot," he continued, lapsing out of a grave mood with all possible celerity, "what do you say to the major's proposal?"

"I say, with monsieur's permission, that if the English gentleman would give me a thousand francs a week, it would not tempt me away any more."

"Not even to be looked upon as a great doctor by the natives?"

"Non, monsieur, I am quite satisfied with holding that position among the old wives at Versailles."

"It is," continued Monsieur Morlot, after a little reflection, "very kind of the Englishman, all the same, to hold me in remembrance."

"He is a brave," said Dr. Lebœuf—a conclusion in which it is earnestly hoped that the reader coincides.

CONCLUSION.

THUS terminates the faithful chronicle of, after all, only six months of Henry Trelane's life. Those months were, however, eventful ones. It was the critical time of his career. When first we made his acquaintance, this man was beginning to drift. He was in considerable danger—in danger of falling into a listless, indolent condition, without what is called an object. He wanted waking up, and the earnestness of purpose latent within him needed renewal. But he was worth powder and shot, and so circumstances came to his aid—circumstances which would arouse every good thing in him, and give the right bias to a nature that oscillated perilously. The events, then, through whose course we have been following Major Trelane, have occupied but a short space of time, but still the reader may have the consolation, if such it should prove, of feeling that concerning that space of time he knows ALL, and a six months' constant association with a man, supposing that we are behind his scenes, and that in the course of the time he is put to some

tolerably severe trial, is quite enough to give us a clear insight into his character. That done, and the particular episode in his life which we have selected for the subject of our narrative being concluded, we can leave him. He is a made man. *We can trust him with the rest of his life.* For we have seen enough of him to know that he will use it well, and that she who shares it—she whom he has promised to love and cherish while she lives—will have cause to bless the day on which her lot was cast in with one who can protect her in danger, comfort her and feel for her in trouble, and be her true and faithful husband—always.

And now a parting word concerning the other characters introduced in the course of this narrative, for I hope it is not presumption of the vilest sort to imagine that the reader may feel some faint desire to know their fate.

That parting which Trelane had anticipated with so much dread between Madame d'Elmar and her niece never took place, after all—or rather, it did take place, but in a different manner. They parted, indeed, but it was not Madeleine who went away from her aunt. The poor lady, whose life had been one of so much suffering and trial, borne with a heavenly constancy and sweetness, departed, herself, on a journey which no man may put off when the time for it arrives, and to a land whither only her niece's love could follow her.

During the time of that sojourn at Versailles which Trelane and his wife were to make before starting for India, there came one afternoon, towards dusk, a message from the house in the Rue Pompadour, to say that Madame d'Elmar, who had been for some days suffering more than usual, had suddenly become much worse, and that she wished without delay to see her niece and her niece's husband. They had left her but a few hours before, but instantly returning, found her greatly changed, and showing by unmistakable signs that the life was ebbing fast away from her. Doctor Lebœuf was there already, but while he administered such restoratives as seemed best to the poor lady, he shook his head, and plainly intimated that the resources of his skill were at an end.

Madeleine knelt by her dear aunt's bed in an agony of grief and self-reproach. On garments white as hers, a small speck shows for more than it really is, and now her conscience stung her bitterly for ever having entertained a thought of leaving that poor solitary lady. "Leave that," she thought, as she touched the wasted hand that lay outside the bed-clothes. And, in truth, to look on that emaciated form was almost more than she could bear. The very garment in which the dying lady was clad looked empty, so reduced, so almost annihilated, was what it covered. The bed-clothes were scarcely raised where her body lay. The folds of her

sleeve failed to indicate that there was an arm beneath it.

At last, after they had stood watching by the bed for some considerable time, the silence, only broken by the stifled sobbing of Madeleine and poor constant Victorine, the dying lady seemed for the first time to become conscious of their presence. Her eyes, partly opened, lit upon her niece, and such an expression of peace, and love, and joy came upon the lady's face, as seemed to belong to nothing of this earth, and to indicate a kind of happiness of which we know but glimpses here. The very soul seemed melting away with the delight of what was coming.

And it did so melt away, its flame giving no flicker as it expired, and no one present knowing when it was that the look of living ecstasy was changed for the calmer happiness of death.

And so it fell out that early in her married life Madeleine came to be in great need of all the comfort and help that her husband could give her.

It was not long after the departure of Trelane and his wife for India, that Alexis d'Elmar, who had never been the same man since that attack —the preliminary symptoms of which have been already described—was seized with such illness as, after a duration of but a few weeks, proved fatal to him. He seemed, however, to have been convinced before his death of the injustice of his opposition to Madeleine's marriage, for a will was found by which

he bequeathed to her the exact sum of money which had been forfeited to him on the day when, in the little English church far away, she became the wife of Henry Trelane.

As for Lieutenant Tronchet, his career may soon be disposed of. It was not a very glorious one. On the occasion of a visit paid by this officer to Baden in search of change and relaxation, he made the acquaintance of a lady, a native of a certain island renowned for its verdure, possessed of a heart of the most susceptible description, and of a small revenue of three hundred pounds a year. This good lady, no longer in her first youth, fell a victim to the fascinations of the gallant lieutenant, and the two were united to their mutual satisfaction. Monsieur Tronchet sold out of the army on the strength of the three hundred a year, and finding the German watering-place a residence greatly to his taste, remained where he was, and occupied himself in endeavouring to increase his wife's property by a diligent attendance at the roulette-table—a proceeding, however, which seems to have been attended with but indifferent success, as the ex-lieutenant has lately been seen by credible witnesses hovering, in a very thread-bare condition, about the tables at Baden, and has even been known to ask a total stranger for the loan of a five-franc piece in order that he might try his luck once more.

Doctor Lebœuf and his faithful attendant Jacques

Morlot made their appearance a few pages back in a scene which may serve to give some idea of their mode of life for many a long year afterwards. As we saw them on that occasion, so they might have been seen over and over again in after years. Let our last impression of them be in that wonderful old room, half study, half laboratory, where the doctor has passed so much of his life in useful labour. To the last those labours went on. The doctor always sought to move with the times, and when he could no longer see to read the different works on medical subjects which from time to time issued from the Paris press, they were read to him by Monsieur Morlot, who dealt with them as with Major Trelane's letter, interspersing them with comments of his own. If ever there was a good and wise doctor, Jean Lebœuf was the man; and if ever there was a faithful and attached domestic, he was to be found in the person of Jacques Morlot.

THE END.

London: Smith, Elder and Co., Little Green Arbour Court, Old Bailey, E.C.

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek

MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

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